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gatekeeper press



THE JOURNAL OF PROCESS ORIENTED PSYCHOLOGY

*Cultural Imaginations that Shape Personal,
Professional, Community and Contextual Relationships*



Edited by Ruth Weyerman, Anup Karia, Julia Wolfson,
Yuliya Filippovska, Pierre Morin

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Tampa, Florida

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Earth Wisdom Mother

AMY MINDELL¹

Though *Earth Wisdom Mother* emerged almost seven years ago, I remember the day she came to birth as if it were yesterday. After having had a cold for a few days, I decided to go out for a walk with Arny in one of our favorite forests in Portland, OR, USA. The sun was shining brightly as we walked down the winding paths lined with towering trees and flowering bushes. At one point, my eyes lit upon a small pile of pink-purple flower petals that had been blown by the wind and were now lying on the ground. I was so excited!

You see, a year earlier, I began exploring a new art form using leaves, flowers, and other pieces of nature. This kind of art utterly captivated me. I became increasingly aware of the endless array of colors, forms, and shapes that nature offered and the creative possibilities that might emerge. I began to notice pieces of nature that would suddenly grab my attention or, as Arny calls it, that would “flirt” with me. I started to gather these pieces of plant life that nature offered to me, brought them home, and discovered what images and figures wanted to arise out of them.

¹ Amy Mindell is a Process Work therapist and teacher. She has helped develop Process Work in the areas of coma, metaskills, creativity, and facilitator styles and is the author of six books as well as papers in professional journals. She is also an artist, singer-songwriter, dancer, and loves dreaming in nature.

On that sunny day in the forest, I picked up the colorful flower petals from the ground and put them in a little bag I now always carried with me. As Arny and I continued our walk, I filled the bag with more fresh and dried leaves, ivy, flowers, and other plants that drew my attention.

When we arrived home, I emptied my bag of “materials” onto our kitchen table. I had a little time and started to play and dream with them. After a few minutes, *Earth Wisdom Mother* began to emerge. Her deep and powerful presence was exciting, surprising, and had a spiritual effect on me.

I needed to catch up on my emails and other tasks, so I left her for the moment and sat down at my desk. Since I had been sick for a few days, I hadn’t been looking at the news. As I scrolled through some of the news of the day, I was delighted to come across an article that reminded me that it was International Women’s Day! A perfect moment for *Earth Wisdom Mother* to arrive!

Later that evening, I meditated more deeply on *Earth Wisdom Mother*’s spirit. She reminded me that it is not me who “makes things.” Rather, it is Mother Nature who creates *through* me. *She* is the artist. At the same time, she is a constant source of wisdom and inspiration if only I, or we, turn our attention to her. I am grateful for her gifts every day.

Editorial

We, Ruth Weyerman, Anup Karia, Julia Wolfson, Yuliya Filippovska, and Pierre Morin, have, with the support of the International Association of Process Oriented Psychology (IAPOP) board, come together with the vision to revive the Journal of Process Oriented Psychology. It is specifically designed to be a new venture/adventure that recognizes the multiplicity of voices within the IAPOP community and represents the application of Process Work in various contexts.

First, we want to thank and acknowledge Amy Mindell, Kate Jobe, and Joe Goodbread, the initial visionaries of the Journal of Process Oriented Psychology, and all the contributors who shared their excitement about Process Work in all the published articles.

As Process Work evolves and is being taught and implemented in many contexts and regions of the world, there is an increasing need for sharing information and learning from each other.²

For the first issue of the revived journal, we chose the following theme:

Cultural Imaginations That Shape Personal, Professional, Community, and Contextual Relationships

² For additional resources and contributions to the increasing body of work in process-oriented psychology or Process Work, please consult the webpage from the International Association of Process Oriented Psychology (IAPOP) at www.iapop.com.

The articles that have come together cover a broad spectrum of Worldwork applications, from working with teenagers in Portland, Oregon, to reconciliation work with youth in Rwanda, from advocacy work about the humane slaughter of cattle in German farms to theoretical musings about the relevance of anti-racism work and the inclusion of the more than human world, from personal reflections about experiencing war in Ukraine to poems expressing feelings about the atrocities of wars and conflicts, from racial-justice work, personal reflections on racisms, and ableism to creative expressions in the form of the cover design using dried flower petals.

We are honored to be able to include many contributions from colleagues of the global majority.

Then, as our world faces multiple challenges, some of the contributions are more focused on pragmatic themes. But we made an effort to incorporate creative expressions as well.

In his trailblazing book, *Sitting in the Fire*,³ Arnold Mindell set the stage for what we now call Worldwork, the strategies and tactics of large group facilitation, advocacy, and conflict resolution. Worldwork, in its theory and application, has multiple layers and objects. It addresses the everyday reality needs for fostering awareness and creating a juster world as well as

³ Arnold Mindell. *Sitting in the Fire*. Lao Tse Press, Portland, OR, 1995.

the more numinous and transpersonal dimensions that coat our lived experiences. This journal issue is limited to the contributions we received and won't give credence to the depth of what Worldwork entails.

Many of the contributions address challenging and difficult situations and experiences. They speak of war, oppression, and trauma. These individual shared experiences, thoughts, and opinions can trigger traumatic responses.

In this seminal book, Arnold Mindell points out that we, as people, cause our problems; that with our lack of awareness of power and rank dynamics and if we don't find ways to permit heated interactions and hostilities, we actually prolong conflict. While peace and good individual and community relationships are the goal, conflict facilitation and resolution need us to tolerate heat and process trauma.

The articles and contributions reflect the author's temporary learning. They are not meant to provide solutions but rather discussion points to raise awareness and offer options. They hopefully will trigger more debates for you to develop your own contextual approaches to addressing the needs of your communities. There are no final right answers to the questions we pose in this journal; there remains only ongoing conversations. Have fun.

Navigating the Conflicting Struggles: A Personal Reflection on Racism, Ableism, and Global Disparities in Process Work Practice

ISAAC MWENJA⁴

In the tapestry of my life, the elements of structural racism and ableism take on a profoundly personal hue. As a person with disability from the Global South, the conflicting difficulties of ableism, racism, and the complex North-South relationship shape my journey. This article aims to offer a firsthand perspective on how these interconnected struggles manifest at the individual, relationship, and collective levels, emphasizing the significance of heightened awareness in Process Work practice.

One of the most tangible expressions of ableism I experienced in the workplace was the constant battle for accessibility. The desks provided were not suitable for my disability, forcing me to advocate for necessary adjustments continually. This struggle for basic accommodations not only hindered my day-to-day work but also left me feeling like I had to fight for my worth within the organization.

⁴ Isaac Mwenja is a member of the Commonwealth Children and Youth Disabilities Network, UNICEF Youth Advocate Ambassador, Gifted Community Centre. He is residing in Nairobi, Kenya, and currently studying Process Work at the Deep Democracy Institute (DDI).

During my internship, I encountered a different form of discrimination when it became apparent that I was hired primarily for the sake of showcasing diversity. This tokenistic approach to hiring, where my disability was seemingly exploited as a symbol of the company's commitment to diversity, left me feeling undervalued and used. In some instances, I was even excluded from important meetings, further reinforcing the notion that my presence was more about optics than genuine inclusion.

The lack of education on disability etiquette in the workplace exacerbated these challenges. Colleagues and superiors often seemed ill-equipped to understand the nuances of interacting with someone with a disability. This lack of awareness contributed to an environment where I felt like I was constantly proving my capabilities and battling against preconceived notions.

Individual Level:

On an individual level, the diversity of racism and ableism adds layers of complexity to day-to-day existence. These difficulties faced by persons with disabilities in the Global South are intensified by systemic racism. One striking example that vividly reflects this intersection was the instances of people approaching me with requests like "May I touch your hair?" On the racial front, the curiosity surrounding my hair can be linked to a long history of racial stereotyping and fetishization. Black people have often been subjected to objectification and exoticization. This curiosity can translate into microaggressions that perpetuate racial

insensitivity, making individuals feel like exotic specimens rather than respected colleagues.

Another prevalent microaggression was the comment “You speak good English” or the compliment “You are so articulate.” While seemingly complimentary on the surface, these remarks carry an underlying assumption that proficiency in English is unexpected or exceptional for someone with my racial background. It reinforces stereotypical expectations and perpetuates the notion that individuals from certain racial or ethnic groups are inherently less articulate or capable.

Another common statement that encapsulates racial insensitivity is “When I look at you, I don’t see color.” This colorblind perspective, while well-intentioned, negates the unique experiences and challenges faced by individuals from racial minorities. It dismisses the significance of racial identity and undermines the importance of acknowledging and celebrating diverse backgrounds.

The assertion, “I’m not a racist. I have several Black friends” reflects a common defensive response to accusations of racism. While having diverse friendships is valuable, it does not absolve individuals from engaging in racially insensitive behavior. This statement often deflects accountability and fails to address the need for increased awareness and sensitivity to racial issues.

Similarly, the sentiment “As a woman, I know what you go through as a racial minority” oversimplifies and conflates the experiences of

gender and race. While both are valid aspects of identity, they come with distinct challenges. This statement can minimize the unique struggles faced by racial minorities and overlooks the specific nuances of racism in favor of a more generalized understanding.

Simultaneously, these microaggressions are intertwined with ableism. It stems from a lack of understanding about my disability and reflects a broader societal tendency to perceive individuals with disabilities as objects of curiosity or inspiration. The assumption that it is acceptable to touch someone without their consent, particularly in the context of a disability, disregards the importance of personal autonomy and reinforces harmful stereotypes.

Process Work specialists need to explore these intersecting elements with awareness and sensitivity, perceiving the diverse idea of discrimination that characterizes these unique experiences.

Relationship Level:

The relationship level further amplified the impact of these encounters. The feeling of being objectified or singled out due to both race and disability contributed to a sense of marginalization and isolation. It underscored the importance of Process Work specialists in helping individuals navigate these power dynamics, foster relationships that move beyond stereotypes, and embrace the complexity of identity. Being a black person with a disability, I often find myself at the nexus of prejudices that affect how I am perceived

and treated. It is critical for Process Work experts to address these perplexing power elements cultivating relationships that rise above stereotype and embrace the diversity intrinsic in my identity.

Collective Level:

Systemic discrimination resounds on a collective level, and the Global South's context setting magnifies the impact of racism and ableism. Economic differences intensify the struggle for inclusion, and as a person with disability, the difficulties I face are deeply rooted in systemic injustice. Process Work practitioners must be attuned to these global power dynamics, recognizing the interconnected idea of discrimination on an overall scale.

Microaggressions, such as comments about language proficiency or colorblind perspectives, reflect not only individual biases but also systemic issues ingrained in the North-South dynamic.

Process Work practitioners must engage with these global power dynamics to effectively address the impact of racism and ableism. Understanding the historical context of the Global North-South relationship is crucial for dismantling ingrained biases and fostering environments that promote inclusivity and respect.

The Global North-South Dynamic:

As someone from the Global South, the relationship between the Global North and the Global South is not a theoretical idea but a lived reality. Historical injustices are human exploitation

worsen incongruities, making it fundamental for Process Work experts to grasp the effect of racism and ableism inside the worldwide setting. The battles faced by persons with disabilities are profoundly intertwined with these bigger elements.

The lack of resources and accessibility in the Global South further compounds the challenges, creating a layered experience for individuals who navigate both racism and ableism within this global context.

In the collaborative effort to address systemic discrimination, Process Work practitioners should be attuned to these global power dynamics. Recognizing the interconnected nature of discrimination on a collective scale involves dismantling biases not only at the individual and interpersonal levels but also at the systemic level. Advocating for inclusive policies and addressing the unique challenges faced by individuals with disabilities, particularly in the Global South, becomes imperative for fostering genuine inclusivity and equality on a global scale.

Mindfulness in Process Work Practice:

In navigating the complex landscape of racism, ableism, and global disparities, heightened awareness turns into a personal imperative in my journey and for Process Work practitioners alike. Acknowledgement of intersecting forms of discrimination and consideration of the global context that shapes these dynamics are crucial. This involves dismantling biases, advocating for inclusive policies, and addressing the unique

challenges faced by individuals with disabilities, particularly in the Global South.

As a person with disability from the Global South, my story is interlaced with the battles of racism, ableism, and worldwide disparities. By sharing this individual viewpoint, I aim to highlight the significance of awareness at the individual, relationship, and collective levels. In the collaborative effort to destroy racism, recognizing the lived encounters of people such as myself is fundamental, cultivating learning networks that are really comprehensive and evenhanded. The journey towards justice and inclusivity requires a profoundly private and far reaching approach, taking into account the complexities of my identity inside the more extensive setting of global power dynamics.

By acknowledging and addressing these forms of discrimination, Process Work practitioners contribute to the dismantling of systemic injustices and the creation of a more equitable world where individuals are valued for their diverse identities and experiences.

Cultural Imaginations That Shape Personal, Professional, Community, and Contextual Relationships

TIN TIN KURIA⁵

It's a beauty to relate to something—a culture, a being, a feeling, a sense of purpose. And to me, when looking back, before I dipped my feet in Process Work, I was always curious about the depth of it all.

Cultural Imaginations. I have had difficulties since I received this title, to understand fully, in what agreements, a culture has while it evolves. Don Miguel Ruiz, in his book *The Four Agreements*, spoke of a dream our forefathers had long ago about how a society would be, and through our capacities to dream, which we have managed to mutate our hearts and minds to the vibration of the Big Dream, Humanity, the dream became our reality.

Personally, I am of African, Kenyan descent, from the tribe of the Agikûyû. I am named after my grandmother, my father's mother, as it is customary to, for a first born daughter. I am a girl, cis. An avid lover of music, art, and nature.

⁵ TinTin Kuria is a Deep Democracy Institute student, based in Nairobi, Kenya, pursuing a diploma. She is passionate about helping people, especially with mental health and awareness, and learning more about psychology in an independent, nonconventional way. She joined the Process Work world in 2018 through DDI, and so far, she has had wonderful experiences and opportunities from the community in Kenya, as well as the Global North and Global South communities.

I am a travel consultant. To the community, I am a youthful lady, caregiver, friend and foe, a potential—wife, house owner, mother, leader, business woman, grandmother, and of soon, an ancestor. And these are the elements in my consensus reality. In my dreaming state, I am a dreamer, survivor, free spirit lurking in the universe.

But having said all this, I am not in any form of Cultural Imaginations. I have had to take a test to tell what my personality is, which according to Myers-Briggs, I am a turbulent INFJ. The Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI)⁶ is a self-help assessment test which helps people gain insights about how they work and learn. It is a framework for relationship building, developing positivism, and achieving excellence. I took the test and found out that I am an INFJ-t (Introverted, Intuitive, Feeling, Judgement). The (t) stands for Turbulent, meaning I'm considered someone less confident and easily stressed.

Also known as “the advocate” or “the idealist” types, we are/I am compassionate, idealistic, and likely to form close bonds with people. A very rare personality, making up to 1% of the population, but also very “loud.” Carl Jung, Eleanor Roosevelt, Bono, J-Hope of BTS, Celine Dion, Plato, and Martin Luther King, Jr. are considered to have/had INFJ personality types.

I am considered a Pisces based on my birthday, and there are certain characteristics about being one that resonates with my being. I might have

⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Myers%E2%80%93Briggs_Type_Indicator

imposter syndrome. I also might have anxiety, but I haven't really paid attention to it to have me diagnosed as one. I have been told that I am intimidating, and a girl like me, if need be—which to my parents, it's a must—I have to be soft and ladylike to attract a future husband. I am asked about my sexuality based on how I dress which seems to be biased as masculine. And the term for that is Masc. I am frowned upon for not going to church every Sunday, and yet that's where I felt the most insecure.

The imaginations of this world about humanity have, in my opinion, deteriorated to the wrong kind of evolution. There are too many “isms” to think about, be woke about, and keep up with. The consensus reality now isn't supportive enough to let humans be humans, without racial profiling, sexuality orientation, gender biases, professional background to measure intelligence and wealth, body shaming to fit a healthy/perfect shape box/bod, family background to measure how connected one is, geographical profiling to mark out the developed and developing, political dynamics that indoctrinate the people into believing lies and settle for oppression.

I am a learner of life, and through Process Work each day, I learn a new thing about me, my life in relation to others. And in so doing, I understand in some level of depth, where to dip my toes, how far to dip, where to avoid the waters at all cost, and, sometimes, the beauty in drowning in the unknown because then I either come out much stronger, smarter, or die trying—not literally—and get my whole being reset to factory settings. All

of this is in the effort to learn how to be human, in understanding and in community with the universe, without any bias, just being a homo sapiens that consumes to be consumed.

It is strange how our descendants will feel that this part of the century we are living in is much simpler compared to what they will have then.

Structural Discrimination and Oppression

WANGU NJOROGÉ⁷

Structural discrimination and oppression have different meanings depending on whom you ask. Structural discrimination can often, at times, be linked to institutional discrimination or systemic discrimination. The concept of this concept plays out in different parts of our day-to-day lives. Oppression is often very intentional and direct, and the system seems to be always broken. However, does that always imply that the system is broken? Or is it a matter of communication breakdown where it's all about them and not the others?

My take on how structural discrimination may play out individually, in relationships, and as a collective is highly influenced by my little knowledge of systemic and institutional discrimination. Discrimination by itself is embedded in attitudes, utterances, and acts.

Structural discrimination is an ongoing process that happens when an organization, individual, community, or system favors one group of people over another. It can be intentional or unintentional but the outcome is always the same: where people who are not part of the majority group are disadvantaged. Systemic discrimination can be seen in many different aspects of life, including,

⁷Wangu Njoroge is from Nairobi, Kenya. She is a communication and marketing manager/consultant. She is passionate about the environment and humans and would love to be the change she wants to see in the future. In her free time, music and books are her best friends.

but not limited to, education, employment, housing, and health care.

The most common examples of systemic discrimination are the racial disparities that exist between whites and the other colors of the human race. Blacks and Latinos are more likely to live in poverty, be unemployed, and lack health care than whites. This is not because these groups are lazy or uneducated but because the system is accustomed to existing problems, such as colonization and cultural norms against them. There are side effects of structural discrimination.

Structural discrimination can also be seen in the **gender pay gap**, in which women are paid less than men for doing the same job. This is because the system is designed to benefit men, who are traditionally seen as the breadwinners.

Health care systems have abused people for centuries. It's so prevalent it has its term: "medical discrimination." Hiding behind the veneer of science, medicine, and doctors, there have been beliefs that the shape of someone's skull is related to their morals. Black people were naturally submissive and therefore meant to be enslaved and treated as lab rats⁸.

Environmental systems are a form of structural discrimination that is related to the locations of landfills, hazardous waste disposals, chemical plants, and other environmentally harmful structures. Africa has become a dumping site for

⁸The Tuskegee study is one of the most infamous examples of health care abuse: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tuskegee_Syphilis_Study

the Global North; when a country in the north wants to get rid of old technology, this land is where they will send it in disguise; we are getting them at an affordable price. In the Global South, environmental hazards are disproportionately placed near communities where the system has failed them and not provided the safety needed or given equal opportunities. Research has shown that while many believe poverty is the #1 risk factor for high pollution exposure, it's the systems in place that only favor the rich or the abled in society and neglect those that don't.

In relationships, structural discrimination is often noticed where there are unequal relations where reciprocity is not a subject matter. For example, submission to leadership is always a matter of choice; however, it has never been that in many cultures where women are supposed to obey their husbands, and if they don't then they become the enemy of the society that has set a bad example.

Discrimination and oppression can take place in different forms:

Overt discrimination is the act of treating someone unequally or unjustly based on specific written policies or procedures. It may also manifest itself in the form of direct prejudicial treatment based on certain characteristics, such as age, gender, ethnicity, race, or sexual orientation. It is more common for someone who identifies as an LGBTQI to be discriminated against and even denied an opportunity at work or in public space. In the golden age, things that were an anomaly

were embraced. However, due to discrimination and oppression, we have been taught that is wrong and people who might be experiencing that should be left alone. Thanks to laws put in place, it is less common to see overt discrimination in the workplace, but it does still happen.

Subtle discrimination is, by nature, a bit harder to spot in the workplace, partly because the offender might know it is wrong or inappropriate but does it anyway. These are acts that are covert or hard to identify, such as comments, jokes, or other behaviors that make people feel uncomfortable or unwanted. Jokes and comments about how one looks or comments on a person who might have a disability make people uncomfortable and demean them.

Associative discrimination against race and origin play a major role in this. Just because of someone's skin color, we all assume that this is their character, and their country of birth, especially if they are African or from a country where there is war, automatically becomes their identity.

Structural discrimination tends to lead to issues like:

Harassment and sexual harassment, third-party harassment, victimization, Youth violence, teen pregnancy, and obesity—to name just a few. These are complicated and multifactorial problems that can feel very “messy” at times. These are structural problems, and they might benefit from new ways of thinking about both the issues and the potential solutions.

Structural discrimination can be difficult to identify and challenging to change. However, it is important to be aware of how the system is biased so that we can work to dismantle it. In Process Work, being aware of these aspects effectively addresses structural discrimination.

Awareness of the potential presence of structural discrimination to an individual, in relationships, and collective contexts as well as leadership in putting systemic discrimination on the agenda and seeking solutions. Getting to the definition, understanding, engagement, and discussion of values, such as dignity, inclusion, and social justice, shape the culture that motivates a commitment to equality, diversity, and nondiscrimination.

What we can do is identify organizational processes to prevent, detect, and remedy all forms of discrimination and to advance equality for groups exposed to systemic discrimination. Discrimination is not always a consensus reality, and it might be a dream reality for others. In Process Work, understanding that all these realities exist helps go through the processes.

The Other Cafeteria Table: A TRU Path toward Friendship

DAWN MENKEN⁹

I am exhausted. I have just completed my sixth year of Teens Rise Up (TRU), a 5-day summer leadership program that brings together a diversity of young people to focus on cultivating leadership and empowering teen voices. It was an enormous organizational effort; the year-long fundraising, acquiring of restaurant and food donors, networking with diverse organizations to make the program truly accessible, and marketing. Eighty percent of participants attend on full scholarship, and no one is ever turned away for lack of funds. The success of this program is in no small part due to the fabulous staff that volunteer and offer their creativity, facilitation skills, and loving attention. Working with this population has taught me so much about applying Process Work with youth. The enormous effort signals the end for me to continue our TRU summer program. And yet, something essential remains in my thoughts that moves me deeply. Friendship.

⁹ Dawn Menken, Ph.D., certified Process Worker, is an internationally respected educator, therapist, and facilitator. She is the creator and director of Teens Rise Up, has created life skills and anti-bullying programs for schools, and works with youth in private practice. Dawn is a founding member of both the Process Work Institute in Portland, Oregon, as well as the original school in Zurich, Switzerland. She is the author of *Raising Parents Raising Kids: Hands-on Wisdom for the Next Generation*, *Facilitating a More Perfect Union: A Guide for Politicians and Leaders*, and *Speak Out: Talking about Love, Sex, and Eternity*. In all of her endeavors, she is moved to improve social discourse and inspire more meaningful civic engagement.

My eyes water as I reflect on the fifth and final day of the program. During our closing circle, Phoenix, an African American boy, put words to the awkward feelings and isolation that we all felt that first day. He said he was surprised to feel so close to people in such a short amount of time. Vlada, a Russian girl, and Liza from the Ukraine both fled the war and, despite the separation of their respective homelands, became inseparable. Hamza, from Iraq, with a huge and gregarious personality declared how much he would miss all of his new friends. Joni, a Chinese, Jewish American, and Layla, an African American—both outspoken girls with natural leadership gifts—stood together as fast friends.

I'm moved by these friendships. How can our youth cross borders, not only the borders of countries but the often more daunting borders of our high-school cafeteria tables? In-groups, cliques, and the resulting segregation of high school is a common experience. And teen isolation has escalated since Covid. Despite living in a world more connected by social media and the internet, teens feel lonelier and more alienated.¹⁰

I thought that youth would be craving to finally gather in person. But I was surprised to find that networking was particularly challenging for TRU this year. It didn't seem to attract many young people. Of course, summertime is a time for family vacation and some teens have summer jobs.

¹⁰ <https://news.harvard.edu/gazette/story/2021/02/young-adults-teens-loneliness-mental-health-coronavirus-covid-pandemic/>, <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2023/jun/19/socially-stunted-how-covid-pandemic-aggravated-young-peoples-loneliness>

However, I learned from teachers that since the pandemic, many youth were not participating in as many in-person events. They were seemingly satisfied to be home and connect with others on social media.

Social media has vast benefits. We can instantly connect with like-minded others, especially when we do feel isolated. However, particularly with youth, researchers are finding that "...many teens discover life and begin to forge their identities in the solitude of their rooms and in front of screens."¹¹ In the teen world where friendships are paramount and fragile, the lack of social development has an impact on adolescent brain development and has contributed to the escalation of mental health challenges and unhappiness of our youth.

While screens can be seen as a safe place for teens to remain in the comfort of their own bubble, they are also an amplification of the trepidation and insecurity to reach out, in real life, to those who we perceive as different. TRU intentionally puts youth in a position to get to know others with different life experiences in a way that is fun but also intimate.

Half of our group this year came to the United States fleeing war. And these experiences are not easily shared. Many American-born youth don't feel the freedom or inclination to inquire about the refugees who end up in their classrooms. In general, teens don't easily share or inquire about

the diversity of life experience with their fellow students, but rather tend to gravitate to those who mirror their own circumstances and "feel" like them. Thus, the segregated cafeteria tables are born. This is not a criticism of our youth; it is instinctual to stay with who and what we know.

Each of us might reflect on our own tendencies to remain in the known comfort of our psychological and inner worlds, as well as in the more socially familiar worlds of homogeneous relationships and community. The sense of familiarity and belonging is central to each of us, and teens, too, crave and seek this out. We might consider that an essential part of education should be to cultivate a curiosity about others and to create an environment in which kids feel free to really learn about experiences that are vastly different than their own. A mind that can inquire about differences—not only as an academic exercise, but as an interpersonal exchange—will do more for our polarized and alienated world.

Essential in our ability to connect with those who are different has to do with understanding our unique histories. At this moment in the United States, education is under serious attack. Many parents, school boards, and governors are on a crusade to whitewash history. Public school curriculums are eliminating or altering how slavery, racism, the Holocaust, Native American History, and LGBTQ experiences are taught or mentioned. Books are being banned based

¹¹<https://exploringyourmind.com/social-media-causes-isolation-in-teens/>

on “student”¹² discomfort. But history is not comfortable. There are certainly triumphs and heroes, but there is also war, oppression, and injustice. Sugarcoating and/or eliminating the painful parts of history does a disservice to our youth, and consequently our world. Our history helps us to feel for the other. It teaches us empathy and inspires us to want to rise above oppression and division and create an inclusive world where each of us feels that we belong.

TRU creates a container in which young people can share their experiences and inquire about others. Youth need an invitation to speak, and they need to know that they will be heard and not further isolated. It takes a lot of inner strength to speak personally and share your experiences. At TRU, we do all kinds of icebreakers and exercises that allow us to gradually get to know each other. Exercises highlight creative expression—visual arts, music, spoken word, video creation—all with the intent to bring out the teen voice and to support them to connect with and develop their own personal power. One of the exercises we do is tug-of-war. Everyone is excited to go outside, take hold of the thick, long rope, and pull with all their strength. It enlivens the group, it’s fun, and

¹² Moms for Liberty is a group that has organized book bans in Florida. Books that address the harsh realities of slavery, ones that depict LGBTQ individuals or families, as well as books that include human sexuality are now banned from public school curriculums. The emphasis is put on the uncomfortable feelings that can arise in children who are from the more socially dominant group. No consideration is given to the discomfort of those from socially marginalized communities. <https://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/590554-bill-to-ban-lessons-making-white-students-feel-discomfort-advances-in/>, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/05/17/books/ban-florida-school-lawsuit-pen.html>

it allows kids to move physically. This activity engages everyone, particularly those who are less verbal. “That was physical strength,” I’ll say afterwards, “now let’s use our psychological or personal strength.” After a playful and physical experience of each other, we’ll be ready to speak more personally.

In this year’s group, I wanted to particularly invite those kids fleeing war to speak. This was a difficult task, not to mention the language barrier. Many were just learning English and felt very shy to speak. There was typical hesitancy and edge behavior¹³ before Vlada came forward. She shared that her Russian family was against the war and that she had two brothers who would have eventually been drafted. The family had to flee. A Ukrainian boy spoke next, describing taking shelter when bombs fell in Kyiv. They quickly picked up both of his grandmothers and fled to Poland, forced to leave their pets behind. Their journey continued to Germany and finally to the US. Three siblings from the Karen tribe with roots in Myanmar then shared their story. They lived in a refugee camp in Thailand for eight years before coming to the US last year. With little recollection of Myanmar, refugee life had been their childhood. Their close-knit family and strong Christian faith sustained them.

Many youth carry that refugee experience but they never get a chance to share it. It’s challenging to speak about their experience when it is so starkly

¹³ Mindell, Arnold. *Sitting in the Fire: Large Group Transformation Using Conflict and Diversity*, Portland, OR: Lao Tse Press, 1995. P. 41-2. Edges are a term to describe the communication blocks that emerge in our interactions.

different from that of their classmates. In fact, it seems that others don't seem interested when in reality, many just don't know how to ask about it. But this group listened intently. They had heard about the war from a distance but never directly from the voices of youth their own age. They took it all in, and in their quiet, I knew that they were hearing experiences from peers that they otherwise wouldn't.

Fundamentally all of us want to be known and feel like we belong. Youth are so consumed with fitting into a majority culture, desperate to feel "normal" and validated, that they rarely feel the kind of confidence that would enable them to share the deeper feelings and life experiences that they have. Most of the teens I work with in private practice want authentic relationships. They stress over the pressure to go along with trends and the unspoken rules of belonging that marginalize their own individuality. They long for friendships of intimacy that are real.

The most basic need is to be wanted. At one of our past TRU workshops, there was a teen with Down syndrome. She was easy going, a little shy, and often found herself on the outside. During the day, she would often quietly step out of the group to sit in the lobby. Someone from our staff would follow her, sit by her side, and engage her. It became a repeated pattern. At one point, I went out to the lobby. "Monica," I said, "I am so happy to see you. I miss you." Her eyes lit up, and she smiled. "I would like to invite you into the group. I think many people would enjoy having you. Can I accompany you back into the

room?" She stood up, grinning from ear-to-ear, and we walked back into the room. I realized that she was communicating something that was so essential and unspoken: the desire to be invited, to be wanted. Each time Monica walked out of the room, she had the chance to be invited back in. There was not only an inherent wisdom in her actions but something fundamental that could be applied to the whole group. When we returned, I mentioned to the group how much I appreciated Monica and that I was learning from her how important it is to feel invited and welcome. I asked if others ever felt that way too. There was so much resonance. Many shared their own experiences of feeling left out, and many realized that they had not reached out to Monica. They then began to appreciate her and connect with her more. She never left the room again. When TRU ended, I received a card from her mother thanking us for the warm and inviting experience that her daughter had.

Not only are youth challenged to find authentic relationships, but they are more challenged to connect with others who have very different life experiences, whether that be due to race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, physical ability, class backgrounds, etc. It is a challenge to cross those borders and to really get to know someone who might appear very different.

Young children, however, are naturally curious when confronted with differences. And they can ask a lot of questions! Many parents can find themselves stunned or ill-equipped to respond to

this innate inquisitiveness. As children get older, they learn the social niceties that prevent them from inquiry and keep them isolated in their own worlds. The dormant curiosity and subsequent void are then filled with the assumptions and stereotypes unconsciously absorbed from the media and others. For those teens from more marginalized groups, those assumptions can be detrimental.

A few years ago at TRU, pre-covid, we had a group process in which Black teens voiced the sense of outrage and injustice due to repeatedly being targeted as too loud and aggressive and were more apt to be blamed for any ensuing conflict.¹⁴ One girl named Labreeya was understandably fuming; the injustice of having to tamp down her expressive nature for fear of triggering the unconscious bias of White teachers and staff left her alienated and open for bullying. She frequently found herself unfairly reprimanded whereas White youth were never held accountable. The value of this group process could not be underestimated. Black youth were given a platform to express their grievances and the depth of their outrage as a diverse group listened.

¹⁴ There have been so many studies showing how unconscious bias in schools leads to unfair disciplinary measures directed towards Black youth and how this impacts their education. Black girls additionally struggle with the gender stereotype in which a white female norm emphasizes a more muted and adapted communication style. <https://news.stanford.edu/2015/04/15/discipline-black-students-041515/>, <https://www.apa.org/news/press/releases/2021/10/black-students-harsh-discipline>, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/0042085916646610>, <https://law.uark.edu/alr/PDFs/68-1/alr-68-1-101-129George.pdf>

The next step was to explore the ghost role¹⁵ of the dismissive teacher or administrator. The teens represented the teacher role and those most impacted by this phenomenon were able to voice the contempt, judgment, and unchecked bias that they experience all too often. It was helpful for us all to see the interaction between these two roles. With no school administrators or teachers in our group who could interact more personally on this issue, I felt it was important for the teens to pick up the sense of power present in the role of the authority. I challenged the teens to step into the authority and model the kind of interaction that they longed for. “You are the authority in some way because you do see the inequity. You see the unconscious bias. You know what should happen here. Be the teacher or principal and model how you would facilitate this conflict.” Labreeya and many others took up the challenge. They stood in the role of the authority, and they modeled fairness. They listened to a variety of positions. They were inquisitive, and they fairly held everyone accountable. It was edgy because youth never imagine that they could really step into their own authority and make an impact. Afterwards, we role-played how youth could actually use their power to speak to their teachers and administrators about unconscious racial bias.

¹⁵ Mindell, Arnold. *Sitting in the Fire: Large Group Transformation Using Conflict and Diversity*, Portland, OR: Lao Tse Press, 1995. Throughout this book, Mindell describes a ghost role as a role that is implied, spoken about, but often not seen or represented. In this case, the group is talking about teachers and administrators, however, they are not present in the group in physical form. They are ghosts that haunt the group dynamic, and their views are often internalized.

By virtue of low social rank, young people's voices are often dismissed. But they crave for their voices to be valued. They find themselves confined within the set roles of child and student, which tend to limit their capacity to connect to their own intelligence and views. In the family work I do, solutions often occur during these role switches in which children take over the role of the parent and vice versa. Not only do children feel empowered, but parents can also enjoy the surprise of stepping into the role of the child! In a school setting, roles of student and teacher can become too static. Youth are teachers too. They are leaders. They want a platform. They want to educate others. They want to be heard. Working with youth means acknowledging their abilities, direction, and wisdom.

I recall some years ago a White, transgender teen shared his experiences with the group at TRU. I could feel his urgency to be known, and at the same time, I could feel the hesitancy in the group, a palpable shyness to engage with an experience that was unknown to them. I supported and admired him for speaking so forthrightly and mentioned that others were quiet because they were shy. They were leaning forward, eyes wide, and giving him attention, but a quiet prevailed. He then said that he often had that response. I asked him how we might address that shyness. I mentioned that many people have not heard personally from a transgender person. He then said he wanted to hear from the group; otherwise, he felt lonelier. I asked him if he felt open if people asked him questions. He said, "absolutely." An African American girl broke the

ice and immediately took up his invitation. What a conversation! The intimacy and transparent exchange of questions and answers brought us all closer together. This young man was happy to have a platform and step into the role of educator. By sharing his experience and inviting questions, he closed a gap. If we don't get to know each other and find the courage to inquire, we remain isolated and are left to the toxic assumptions that keep us divided.

The so-called "culture wars" in the US, as well as in some other countries, have created an intense polarization. I believe that our lack of real contact and authentic relationships is broadening that divide. The current atmosphere in many circles is tense. People are afraid to be hurt. People are afraid to offend. Curiosity is not encouraged nor nurtured by human contact. We learn about diversity in our silos, too afraid to take a risk, be canceled, or to feel the pain and fatigue of having to share once again our personal experience. As a result, our relationship to diversity is often not relational. It exists solely on the level of policies and politics. Of course, such systemic solutions are needed, but I believe if we really want to break through, we must relate. We must take the risk to be known. The teens in TRU remind me of this. Friendship is transformative!

Over six years, the teens at TRU have moved me bearing witness to their courage to cross borders and divisions. I do an anonymous and creative sorting process to discover what kinds of issues and divisions are present in teen groups. We use posters (created for TRU) that name different

kinds of social experiences that teens encounter. Each poster focuses on a particular theme like race and ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, etc. We hang these large posters on a clothesline across the room. We then distribute one-inch laminated squares. One side is white, and the other side is either green or red. Teens mingle around the posters and determine whether the issue on the poster has impacted them or not. If they have had that experience, they take the green square and affix it to the poster but with the white side facing up.

If it does not impact them, they take a red square and affix it to the poster also with the white side up. The point of doing this exercise is to see the group field and to sort in an anonymous way that creates less personal risk. After we have all affixed our squares, we have the big reveal. We flip the squares and then we can see which posters are green dominant or red.

Each year, the one that always has the most green squares is the issue of appearance. Physical appearance is a significant barrier and functions as a gatekeeper, bringing some of us closer while leaving others at a distance.



¹⁶ Posters created for Teens Rise Up by Ariana Jacob, 2015.

One of our group processes on this theme will always stay close to my heart.

The topic always polarizes into two roles: The side that feels hurt by the value that society puts on appearance and the side that is society itself deeming someone as valuable or not based on their appearance.

In this group process, young women quickly come forward to give voice to the pain of living in a female body that is always being judged and scrutinized. Many speak about looks and popularity and being judged on the size or shape of their body. Boys speak about not being tall or muscular enough, and teens of color speak about the value put on white standards of beauty. We represent the role of “the appearance police,” the one who is looking and judging and upholding certain standards of beauty.

Rachel then rolls into the middle of the room. She is in an electric wheelchair and has many physical challenges, unable to walk and arms that she cannot raise. The moment is powerful; “Look at me,” she says, “no one really sees me, no one thinks I am beautiful.” There is a hush in the room. We all feel her. This process has crystallized around her courageous expression, and I ask if I can work more deeply with her. She consents, and I tell her that I am going to briefly represent those awful critical and judgmental voices that live inside and outside of her. Her job is to follow what comes up inside of her and to believe in it. I represent that awful voice, and it doesn’t take long for her to say that she wants to scream. We encourage her and amplify the

scream, and it transforms itself into a whooping warrior cry. The whole group helps her to express the roar of the warrior, the pride and power. She is doing something for all of us. Her courage to authentically react and to feel the essence of power in her voice transforms the “appearance police,” as well as everyone in that room. As we stand closer together in a circle, I reflect back to her how she has changed us. She has put us all in contact with the pride of the warrior who can stand up to such formidable and denigrating cultural voices. But there is one more step.

That wheelchair is a barrier. We are standing close, and I have the sense that people are shy to get closer, to even embrace her. I ask if there is anyone in the group who wants to come even closer, to possibly hug her. Vanesia jumps in, “I want to hug her.” Rachel lights up, and Vanesia approaches Rachel in her chair and embraces her. I see a tear roll down Rachel’s face. “What makes you cry?” I ask. “I so much want to hug her back, but I can’t move my arms. I have never hugged someone.” The group all feels the gravity of that reality. I then ask her if I could help her to move her arms. Could I raise them up around Vanesia for her. “Yes! Please,” she says. It is an extraordinary moment watching that first hug. Tears pour down Rachel’s face as she embraces a friend for the first time. The whole group proceeds to move in around Rachel for a big hug.

For someone who existed mostly on the margins for her entire life, Rachel became the glue that brought us all together in that moment. I am forever grateful for this undying spirit of love and

friendship, the greatest power that can cross the borders of countries, cafeteria tables, wheelchairs, and identity groups.

Acknowledgements

There are approximately thirty people who volunteered to work on the TRU staff over the years, and I am deeply grateful to them all for their time, love, and creativity. There are too many names to mention, but Denzolo has been with me each year, my right-hand man, whose tech skills, creativity, and big heart have helped to carry this program. The Process Work Institute of Portland has supported and hosted TRU each year, creating a warm, welcoming environment that the community could feel proud of. Without the generosity of our donors, this program would not have endured. A handful of program donations and a grant kept us afloat, along with over twenty-five restaurants, farmers, and food donors that have supplied lunches, snacks, and food for our celebratory community BBQ. Essential to my values was to address any possible disparity regarding food access and create community around mealtime. Anyone who works with teens knows the prominence of food! I also want to thank the dozens of schools and organizations who have supported TRU and sent their students our way. TRU has really been a community celebration, and I am grateful for all of the support, generosity, and kindness. Thank you to Anna Braz for her skillful editing. Finally, I want to appreciate all of our participants. They have enriched each other with their courage and sincerity and have

impacted the TRU community. Years later, I hear from many of them who share that TRU changed their lives, and that they are carrying something of that experience forward. I am forever grateful to have been part of that path.

Youth Team Leaders Sharing Their Experience of a Campaign against Genocide in Rwanda

INNOCENT MUSORE¹⁷

Few years ago, the government of Rwanda initiated peace studies through courses of social studies, religion, aimed to look at how best to facilitate peace building and the prevention of conflict among Rwandans. A nonlocal, nongovernment organization dubbed “Global initiative for Environment and Reconciliation (GER) Rwanda” partnered with “Force for Change CFOR,” the London based Process Work facilitation organization founded by Jean-Claude and Arlene Audergon to support the process of reconciliation in Rwanda with a focus on youth.

¹⁷ Innocent Musore, Founder and Executive Director of GER-Rwanda, is a facilitator and peace-building activist with over fifteen years of experience in facilitating training, interactive workshops, and community interactions, focusing on individuals affected by conflicts and genocide in Rwanda and the Great Lakes regions. Trained by CFOR-Process Work UK in Leadership and Conflict Facilitation, Innocent has spearheaded various projects addressing climate resilience, nature conservation, gender, climate change, Youth-Healing the past, reconciliation, and the future. Innocent’s expertise extends to facilitating interactions with diverse groups, including genocide survivors, perpetrators, refugees, and youth affected by the genocide, such as those from perpetrators’ families, individuals born as a result of rape, historically marginalized groups, and female victims of gender-based violence. Recognizing the specific impact on these individuals, Innocent is dedicated to his life’s purpose of making a positive impact, continuously learning from his work, and ensuring that others benefit from it. His vision is to contribute to existing reconciliation processes and holistic peacebuilding not only in Rwanda but also beyond. www.globalr.org

The Transformative Leadership Program aims at training beneficiaries qualities of a good leader, how the youth leadership can aid oneself, and the family at the society at large to bring change. The three-year program aims at transformation, unity, and integration among Rwandans. It has about 240 beneficiaries as team leaders across six Districts of Kicukiro, Gasabo, Musanze, Bugesera, Rwamagana, and Ruhango.

Beneficiaries come from post-genocide generation, survivors, former infants during the 1994 genocide against Tutsi, young generation from the perpetrator’s side, kids from rape during that time, and the historical marginalized group. After realizing how the post-genocide generation has been affected by the 1994 tragedies leading to various effects, GER Rwanda was established.



Youth during Interactions

To take the initiative to the district level, we pick representatives from the selected districts, one from all mentioned categories, and take them through the programs of healing, studies, and

trainings. The groups are linked to their districts of origin for recognition and facilitation and to continue working with the districts in the journey of reconciliation. The purpose is to bring change on an individual level, family, and the community at large. We realized that youth are the bridge of reconciliation; they have a special mind of bringing change. They attract each other but also encourage their families to call to unite and reconciliation, as one way to help themselves heal from genocide trauma within and facilitate the future.

We found that young people adapt to changes easily. Through transformative deep dialogue used in the program, beneficiaries release their feelings, grieve and that helps them in relief, adding that that's a journey to healing because healing is a process.

Through the program, beneficiaries hold different activities to speed up healing, unity, reconciliation, and integrity, such as visiting historical places like museums to learn more deeply about the co-history. Other reconciliation programs and activities uplift the groups of beneficiaries' initiatives through capacity building and supporting initiatives financially.

According to Francine Nsengiyumva, one of the group leaders in Gasabo district, people have changed their mind due to integration program.

“We joined interactions with lost minds, broken with no hope but their programs have aided us get to the co of oneself and that has really worked to improve self-esteem, and we have come to understand each other in our communities. The

low self-esteem never made us feel life, free and whole in society, but now we are good on the journey of building ourselves, our families and friends, since we are ambassadors of others in our community. We bridge together and can see mindset changing.”

Bunani Martin, a participant said that “the first time when I was invited to participate in interactions, I didn't even understand what the organization is all about and its purpose. But with the consistency and follow up on us, we started understanding their purpose and started implementing the commitments we had made together.”

He also said that before these programs, the hatred between young generation from Genocide survivors, perpetrator's side, and marginalized people was intense in their district: “You couldn't wish to meet a person from the perpetrator's side, every time you were about to meet any that you don't share history, you could turn the routes; we couldn't greet each other or have any kind of discussions together.”

Bunani further added that, after they received fully program and the mind was changed, they joint all beneficiaries in their district for trainings and later, after the positive mind was archived, they developed an initiative that would gather them together at least twice a month and decided to contribute Rwf1, 500 as well twice in a month, to facilitate the initiative.

They started breeding, as something not often done in their district, where the group every month buys one of the beneficiaries a domestic animal worth

Rwf 30, 000. That also facilitates the beneficiary get fertilizers for their crops. So far, eight people out of fourteen group members have received the animal.

Bunani further said that the group has also invested in garlic farming, a crop highly demanded on the market.

Through several activities and reconciliation programs they constantly hold in their districts, some families from the perpetrator's side have returned and paid for the properties they had stolen and damaged from certain survivors, and so far, four families have participated, Bunani said.

Francois Ntibakunze, from Gahanga, Kicukiro district, is grateful for GER and CFOR Rwanda activities: "The program proved to us that we should put together and work together and we come up with reaching out to people initiatives, where we carried out various activities, such as building for the needy, building kitchen garden in every ECD in our district, and more." He says that they have also become aware about the names given to certain groups of people in some villages in Kicukiro District (as a way of promoting genocide ideologies) and they are now sinking more in village outreach for discussions and eradicate such acts.



Group Photo of Team Youth Leaders

Global initiative for Environment and Reconciliation Rwanda aims at facilitating conflict transformation, healing towards reconciliation, and nature for a sustainable future. It contributes to peace building, ecosystem management, and community development in Rwanda.

The Body's Offering

LISA MARKS¹⁸

Sometimes it is too painful to be in a body. Especially when black people are killed because they are black and veterans shoot policemen. Men rape and abuse women and get away with it. People blow up themselves and others. Our brothers and sisters in their despair have decided that someone has to die, their fellow countrymen, the other religious sect, whoever is in the way of righteousness. The planet is burning, and we are helpless to act. Symptoms of a world on fire, humanity stands at the edge, looking into an abyss so deep and wide we dare not leap.

¹⁸ Lisa Marks MA LMHC had a dream that inspired a lifelong movement practice. Out of her journey arose the Sentient Body Explorations. Resting on the theoretical foundations of Process Work Psychology, Sentient Body Explorations demonstrate how subtle awareness and movement reveal information drawing us closer to our essential selves and our soul's purpose. Lisa is a psychotherapist, Organizational Consultant, Process Work Associate, Sentient Body Coach, and Certified Soul Motion™ Teacher. Her focus is the sentient physical body and how it guides us in relationship to the Earth and our underlying wholeness.

Lisa takes her movement to the trees and beaches at her homes in the remote woods and waters of the Upper Peninsula of Michigan and the Olympic Peninsula of Washington. Her passions include her spiritual and movement practices, gardening, hiking, poetry, and performing with Yesango Marimba Band.

She believes "Embodiment is our opportunity and commitment to evolve with the sentient Earth through the personal landscape of our bodies. As sentient beings, we experience a fundamental attunement with everything continuously at a cellular level, rewriting our definition of who we are as human beings and of reality." Lisa Marks, Sentient Body, Sentient Earth

When I become numb or obsess on the news and what other people are thinking, then it is time to feel. I stand at Search Bay holding these thoughts, my body dull and leaden beneath their burdens. The only door in is movement, to dance the self free and discover the body's offering woven from subtle gesture and feeling.

Music is the sound of waves and wind. The clouds move with me, joined by birds calling in the forest and over the waters. Trees bow gracefully before the elements. My body's prayer longs for presence. It moves up through layers of pain. Tears fall as anguish rises on the tail of hands spreading through space. Body weaves right and left, sinks down, rises up. Feet caress the ground, connecting with support, with the Earth.

The body leads with each tear shed. With each contraction of grief, I step into feeling and freedom. My body knows what truth is. Truth is not this painful separateness, this struggle to rise into power that is removed from the greater good. My body knows the truth.

We stand at the edge of an awareness revolution. Where our heritage as human beings committed to tribes and survival burns to become a unity of being. I can't tell you what that means, but standing on the shores of Search Bay, a place that called me to its wild beaches, I know. We are poised to leap...to enter a reality where we know ourselves as one, as unbroken wholeness unfolding. Where we will look at the "other" and see our struggle for love and acceptance.

We will know we are there when we recognize ourselves in Vladimir Putin and Donald Trump.

When I discover I am both the black man stopped in traffic by police and then dead and the policeman shooting in terror. I am the woman who goes to a party and wakes up raped. We are all refugees, whether in a camp in South Sudan without hope or as Ukrainians driven from our homes and lives.

This is no one's fault. We endlessly assign blame and hate those who are responsible, perpetuating the trauma of tribal stories of survival. We have choices. We can feel.

It is time. The planet is calling through horrors and polarities that lie on top of the chaos we fear, calling us to open to a bigger picture, to let go of control, to follow. Polarities are strong, humanity is a caricature of itself. Chaos is present, the Earth is in crisis, and we are in crisis.

What emerges from within is something we cannot contain or control. This is love, unfathomable overwhelming love. It lives inside our bodies, waiting for us to slow down and drop in. This home, our body, is intimately connected with the Earth. If we let the body out of its box and into our worlds...if we let words follow movement and presence, we might find home together, here.

I stand on the shores of Lake Huron and follow the body's weaving. It is beautiful. My body welcomes me home as I sink deeply into its truth, for a moment. The body's truth is amazing; I can barely stay present when it opens doors to what lies behind this dense reality we claim. The intelligence orchestrating all we experience asks me to let go, to become a fluid center, like the waters that roll endlessly into the beach where I stand.



This request is so anxiety provoking, so chaotic that I retreat, before I can step forward.

I join the larches and birches, cedars and pine, sandhill cranes and bald eagles, the endless chorus of seagulls diving overhead. How to let go and welcome them? My body knows! Once the layers of pain and burdens of responsibility are shed, I leave behind a skin so tight that it kills.

Then I become the offering. I join the waters and the Earth unfolding the body's "prayer," moments of deep feeling and presence, for a planet standing at the edge. We each have to choose whether to burn or leap, it doesn't really matter what choice we make. Whatever we choose serves unbroken wholeness. It loves and accommodates all. I choose love.

I don't know how to love as deeply as I am called to. Maybe if I show up, returning again and again to this body, if I follow movement into prayer, presence and communion, I can join the revolution at hand. A revolution of awareness and welcome for a reality so large it can't be held by the mind.

But the body, ah the body. The body rejoices to immerse itself in love, relieved to be included, excited to lead this journey home.

From Paris to Columbia, Beirut to Selma

LISA MARKS 2015

Today, I heard about the dead in Paris,
innocence at a concert, the soccer game,
sitting in local cafes.

Yesterday, I heard about Beirut
and the ones who died at the market.
Last week there were suicide bombings in Iraq.

So many die, as I sit in pine-paneled bars,
where TV's bring stories into our evening
on this remote shore of Lake Huron.
No one notices, and when I express horror
they turn and shrug,
these stories far from the truth of their lives.

Last night I watched the movie Selma,
reminded that those who hate rabidly are here too.
In Columbia, Missouri, some have been harassing
black people who share the campus, fellow students.
Instead of teammates rooting together,
they are an "us" and "them."
Pain arises because policemen
look at young black men
with fear instead of promise
and kill too often without reason.

My heart cracks on these tears,
wondering if there is no end
too vulnerable and afraid turning hard and hateful.
Helplessness wants to destroy, to kill,
to disappear anything that is "other"
so there will be nothing to defend against.

What is being defended so valiantly,
with bullets and blood, bombs and hatred,
and even they say love, is a mystery to me.
When we sink deeply we find
the same tender pulsing flesh,
always vulnerable to death
and the end of this thing we call "I."

This is where equality begins!
We are born together into a slow march
or a quick run to our deaths.
We all belong to this dance on a planet,
some of us denied hope for futures and basic rights
while others stand upon our shoulders
pretending to keep this common end at bay.

But really we all love.
Even when it sours into hatred,
the seed begins with love.

Today, I want to welcome all.
The hard hatreds grown from seeds planted in
despair,
the hopelessness of ones who have no future,
others who blame and can't step through the door
that opens hearts to the wonder of flesh
pulsing with breath and blood.

This too is me on this planet!
I am every person who stands here,
all born to plant our seeds,
shallow or deep, in hope or despair.

Today, there is no other.
No hatred inside for the ones who are privileged
or the ones who kill in their hunger
for power in a chaotic world.

This dance between us is powerful ,
cracking the box that holds us tight,
a world locked in definitions of
dark and light, us and them, hatred and love.
There is no you without me, no light without dark,
no love without hatred.
There is no either/or.

The future is both/and.
Each of us called to step forward, to open our
hearts
to each “other” as our own.
These words are what I offer
to the pain, to the horror,
to the incredible joy and privilege
of being human,
this gift of love.

Cultural Imagination

BILL SAY¹⁹

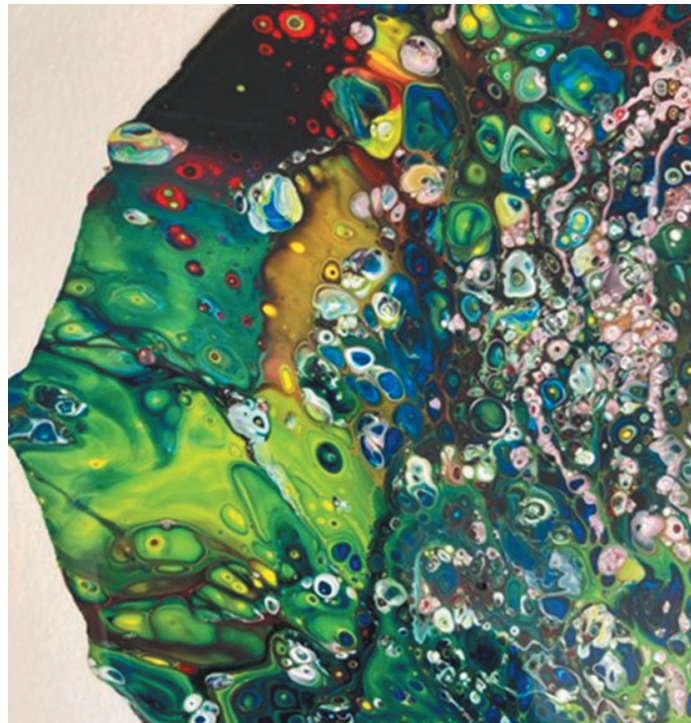
Lately, the *community* I've been dreaming of comes at the toss of my hand, at night, a pouring of colors, paints, water, and other additives. The mixture flows down the sheet of paper, canvas, or ceramic tile: molten, shimmering in its unformed potential. Then, I wake in the morning, excited to see what is what.

¹⁹ Bill Say is a Process Work diplomate living in the San Francisco Bay Area. He teaches at the Process Work Institutes in Portland Oregon, and Hawaii, California Institute of Integral Studies, and the Wright Institute. Bill is the author of the ebook, *The Life Myth: Discovering, Following, and Living It*. His website is: www.billsay.com.

I often notice—in classes on multicultural counseling, a group process, or with a gathering of colleagues—a coming together, then a swelling of problems, and, sometimes, a slowing of it all, together, feeling, thinking, wrestling together. For the moment anyway, room for it all, for us all.

Or, I get to have times when I sit in the mess, the richness and difficulty, of my inner process and finally feel the shift when I can be with it all. When it makes some kind of sense. Where it's even a bit meaningful, or not, but I can still be with it all.

The Tao, God, the communal mind seems close in precious moments. Like a moment of warmth with someone who seems like a friend. Huddled together in complex learning. Red rust, blue ocean, white silver, water, agar, thrown together, fitfully, freely flowing, spilling over the page. Together.



Choosing Life

PIERRE MORIN 2023

Mortal enemies
in the embrace of death.
Their fate
like the pull of gravity,
like the moon
birthing the swell,
heaving the waves
that end up thundering
onto the lava rocks.

Isaac and Ishmael,
the sons of Abraham,
are fighting for the exclusive
love of God.

Their descendant's histories,
entwined like a double helix
of horror, trauma, and war
are pitting
settlers against terrorists,
survivors against freedom fighters,
soldiering fathers and mothers
against children and grandparents,
believers against each other.

Hopeless yet determined
to avenge
ancestral suffering
their bodies' and cultures' chemistry,
their pasts imprinting their genes,
their hormones and nerve cells
imprisoning their actions,
questioning free will,
precluding victims from being perpetrators?

What will remain
when the tides retreat?
Leaving the rubbles and bodies,
abandoned and mute,
to be the only witness.
A distant memory
of the sound of waves,
of the echo of bullets and bombs.

The dead calling out loud
for all of us to honor
the break of dawn.
A different imagination
that believes in
our common humanity
and our creative powers
to rebuild community
and new life.

The Raven's Call

LISA MARKS 2018

Trees are different cloaked in white.
Wisdom elders drawing close,
they hold us in their circle,
like a Taos painting I once saw.
Left palm aches to imagine
a community of power
in these distant woods
where winter lays a heavy hand.

This is the time.
Dark, cold moments
when power steps forth,
held by ancient ones
appearing as trees.
Spruce and cedar so tall,
I want to expand my length,
to dance in their arms.
to join these keepers of eternity.

Raven's call resounds
through muffled woods,
drawing edges closer,
inviting all to be present.
Even the towering pines
at Search Bay ride black wings
to the wisdom council.

This is about power.
Tree's have power
in their deep-rooted stance.
I have power
when I surrender
to what rises
to show the way.
No choice but surrender,
death is assured
for us all.

So why not
dance toward death
on the feet of power?
Dance toward death on
a planet exploding inward.
The cloak of power beyond grasp,
we self-destruct to escape
its heavy mantle.

Power is here.
In you and me,
in these ancient trees,
and the saplings emerging
beneath their branches.
We are power, powerful.

Wisdom council of elders
calls wolves and bears,
swift-footed coyotes, ravens, and eagles.
All call us to join the ring of power.
Destiny created
by the direction of breath
and the love in our hearts.

Everyone is called to this table.
The homeless on city streets,
albatross eating plastic in Antarctica,
Polar bears losing their ground,
even the Koch brothers bent on destruction
of what we hold dear.

We are all called.
Why miss this chance?
It only comes once in a millennium.
We can rise to evolution's mandate.
Join with power.
All the rest is naught,
meaningless,
to an awareness revolution
necessary for our existence.
Today, the raven's call.
How will I join them?

Fostering Understanding in Racial Justice and International Conflicts

DIANE WONG²⁰

Contextual Background: My Transformative Journey

In 1999, a flyer in Eugene, Oregon, reading “Seeking Spiritual Warriors,” marked the beginning of my profound journey into Process Work.

²⁰ Diane Wong is not just the founder of Diane Wong Consulting (DWC) and the Racial Justice Collaborative (RJC)—she is a pioneer in integrating mindfulness and healing into the realms of racial justice and personal development. With her innovative approach, Diane stands at the forefront of transformative change, both in personal and business spheres. At the core of Diane’s work is a profound belief in the power of healing and energy frameworks. She is recognized as a visionary healer, a consultant with deep insight, and a justice facilitator who bridges gaps with empathy and understanding. Her methods are not just about providing solutions but nurturing growth and fostering sustainable change.

Healing With Diane: A Journey Inwards for Outward Impact

“Healing With Diane” is a program that epitomizes her unique approach. This initiative blends yoga, meditation, and mindfulness to facilitate a journey where individuals can explore and strengthen the connection between their internal world and their external reality. Diane’s philosophy is rooted in the idea that we shape our lives from the inside out. By guiding her clients to peel away layers of obstacles and unlearn harmful practices and thought patterns, Diane empowers them to step into a life of optimal health and well-being. Diane’s work with individuals and groups goes beyond conventional healing. She is committed to supporting her clients on their path to healing, helping them unlock their potential to live lives that are not only healthier but also more harmonious and aligned with their core values. With her unparalleled expertise, Diane Wong is not just a consultant but a catalyst for change, making a tangible difference in the lives of those she works with and contributing significantly to the broader discourse on health, healing, and racial justice.

Joining Army and Amy Mindell and the Process Work community for a two-week retreat on the Oregon Coast, I dove deep into the philosophy of Worldwork, emphasizing cultural and racial diversity, inner work, community building, and leadership development. The pivotal technique I learned there was “Burning My Wood,” a profound method for releasing internalized trauma and oppression, allowing me to exhale decades of internalized beliefs and breathe in newfound liberation.

The Need for New Approaches in Tumultuous Times

Today, our society faces critical challenges: escalating racial tensions and the intensifying Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The aftermath of George Floyd’s murder and the prospect of a second Trump presidency juxtaposed against the backdrop of Hamas’ killings and kidnappings and Gaza’s near annihilation highlight an urgent need for peace and understanding. These complex issues require more than just dialogue; they necessitate a commitment to deep listening and understanding, an area where the Racial Justice Collaborative (RJC) and the Process Work community excel.

Part 1: Deep Dive into Racial Tensions in the US

The Legacy of Racial Conflict

In 2024, the US grapples with a history of African American slavery, discrimination, and violence. Despite progress since the Civil Rights Movement, systemic racism continues to undermine societal harmony. Barack Obama’s presidency, a historical

milestone, paradoxically ignited white supremacist backlash, culminating in the divisive tenure of Donald Trump.

Personal Narrative: From Cleveland to Harvard

My journey from the Black Ghetto of Cleveland, Ohio, to Harvard Law School led me to Process Work, where I discovered powerful tools to combat internalized oppression and champion racial justice.

Part 2: A New Wave of Racial Reckoning

The murder of George Floyd served as a harrowing wake-up call, laying bare the pervasive racial wounds that continue to afflict our society. The worldwide outcry that followed was a demand for an end to the cycle of racial violence and injustice. Yet, as we navigate this crucial moment, our path is fraught with obstacles.

Book banning is on the rise, the truth about our racial history is outlawed in schools, and DEI is blamed for antisemitism in elite universities. Recent Supreme Court decisions and the polarizing rhetoric of figures like Donald Trump have only deepened the divisions, making clear that mere dialogue is no longer sufficient.

Part 3: The Israeli-Palestinian Conflict: The Historical and Current Turmoil

This age-old conflict, characterized by its enduring cycles of aggression and suffering, has prompted a global call for an immediate cessation of hostilities and a durable peace. The international community, with students and activists at the

forefront, voices a collective demand for humane solutions. In such a charged atmosphere, people on all sides of the conflict seek solutions and recognition of their profound grief and fear. They need avenues to express their deepest emotions, to be acknowledged, and to be heard without fear of retribution or dismissal.

We must collectively commit to deep listening and witnessing, creating safe spaces where the pain and anger of centuries can be expressed and validated. This is not merely an intellectual exercise but a moral imperative to acknowledge these wounds in a step toward genuine healing and reconciliation.

The Role of RJC and Process Work

In these turbulent times, the innovative methodologies of the Racial Justice Collaborative (RJC) and Process Work are more vital than ever. By orchestrating spaces where individuals from all perspectives can safely express their trauma, fears, and beliefs, we create a crucible for healing. This approach is not about immediate resolution but fostering an environment where gradual engagement with complex emotions and narratives can occur. Through this careful, empathetic engagement, we begin to untangle the intricate web of pain and misunderstanding surrounding conflicts.

Part 4: The Transformative Power of Active Listening and Speaking Out Loud

Active listening without commentary or opinion is pivotal in fostering understanding and healing, particularly in conflict resolution. Its significance

goes beyond just hearing words; it involves profoundly engaging with the speaker's emotions, experiences, and perspectives.

Building Trust and Safety: Active listening establishes trust and safety in dialogues. When individuals feel genuinely heard and understood, they are more inclined to share deeply, leading to transparent and honest communication.

Active listening is an invaluable tool for both personal and collective growth. It enables individuals to reflect on their thoughts, leading to significant insights and perspective changes. This method aids personal development and fosters mutual understanding and empathy, nurturing stronger, more compassionate communities.

The Value of Speaking Out Loud

When individuals verbalize their thoughts and feelings, especially on challenging topics, it initiates several transformative processes:

Self-Reflection and Clarity: Speaking out loud offers a chance for enhanced self-awareness. It can be revelatory, as individuals hear their own words and the underlying emotions, leading to clarity about their true thoughts and feelings.

Clarification of Thoughts: Articulating complex emotions and thoughts brings clarity and often uncovers underlying beliefs or conflicts previously unrecognized.

Reevaluation of Beliefs: Assessing and Changing Beliefs: Hearing themselves, individuals can critically evaluate their beliefs, discerning whether these align with their current values and understanding. This process can be a catalyst for personal change and growth.

In summary, active listening and the opportunity to speak aloud transform individual experiences into collective wisdom, paving the way for more empathetic and connected human interactions.

Global Examples and Collective Healing

The South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission exemplifies the power of active listening in a national healing context. Through its processes, individuals were allowed to speak and be heard, facilitating federal acknowledgment, understanding, and healing.

Envisioning a Society Rooted in Active Listening

The goal is to create a society where active listening and witnessing are integral practices, recognized as essential tools for healing and reconciling communities. Every individual's story and voice are valued in such a society, contributing to a collective understanding and empathy. This vision extends beyond formal conflict resolution settings, encompassing all levels of interaction—from interpersonal relationships to national dialogues, creating a more compassionate and understanding world.

Part 5: The Crucial Role of Facilitators in Fostering Understanding

The heightened racial tensions and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict underscore the need for skilled facilitators in creating platforms for understanding. The RJC recognizes the importance of this role in racial justice and international disputes.

Creating Platforms for Expression

The RJC organizes forums for listening and witnessing, which is crucial in racial justice issues and international conflicts like the Israeli-Palestinian situation. These forums, devoid of debate, are designed for acknowledgement, and being seen and heard, allowing individuals to express their feelings and experiences in a safe space.

Role Flexibility and Empathy

Facilitators practice handling dialogue in civil society involving racial dynamics and international conflicts. Emphasizing the need to reflect a wide range of perspectives, facilitators prepare to embody and shift into roles that may challenge their personal beliefs, fostering more profound understanding and transforming contentious discussions.

Conclusion: An Urgent Call to Action for Facilitators in Healing Our World

At this critical juncture, with escalating racial tensions and the intricacies of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict unfolding, the Racial Justice Collaborative (RJC) urgently calls for skilled facilitators to help organizations and communities understand the situations and concerns of students, teachers, schools, workplaces, organizations, and colleagues. These facilitators are not just mediators but healers of a world torn by conflict and strife. The deep-seated beliefs and communication barriers in these conflicts necessitate a novel approach that wholeheartedly embraces many perspectives and roles.

Join us in this transformative endeavor. Your commitment to this cause is critical in shaping a more empathetic, understanding, and unified society. Step forward boldly, embrace your role in this movement toward change and peace, and help heal our planet. The time for dedicated facilitation is now, and your participation in this journey is invaluable and indispensable.

Centering Animated Life: Race and the More-than Human World

PIERRE MORIN²¹

Hui Tzu said to Chuang Tzu: “All your teaching is centered on what has no use.”

Chuang replied: “If you have no appreciation for what has no use you cannot begin to talk about what can be used. The earth, for example, is broad and vast but of all this expanse a man only uses a few inches upon which he happens to be standing. Now suppose you suddenly take away all that he is not actually using so that, all around his feet a gulf yawns, and he stands in the void, with nowhere solid except right under each foot: how long will he be able to use what he is using?”

Hui Tzu said: “It would cease to serve any purpose.”

Chuang Tzu concluded: “This shows the absolute necessity of what has ‘no use.’”²²

²¹ Pierre Morin MD, PhD, currently works as consultant for culturally specific behavioral health clinics and as a counselor in private practice. He worked for twenty years as clinical director and supervisor with refugees and trauma survivors in a community outpatient mental health setting in Portland, Oregon. As a physician in Switzerland, he worked in the fields of brain injury recovery and psychosocial medicine. He is the author of *Health in Sickness and Sickness in Health*, *Big Medicine: Transforming Your Relationship with Your Body, Health, and Community*, and *Communal Medicine: A Path to Physical, Emotional, and Social Health*. He is an international coach and trainer of Process-oriented Psychology (Process Work) and former president and current board member of the International Association of Process-oriented Psychology (IAPOP).

²² Thomas Merton, *The Way of Chuang Tzu*. New Directions Publishing Corporation, New York, 1969.

In our shared human *Umwelt*²³ there is an ecological relevance for us to recognize the centrality of race as a significant relational and social factor and dynamism that shapes the lived experience and chance of survival for Blacks and other people of color. The context in which we experience the world is important, even existential²⁴ and for us humans the artificial construct of race, besides other defining social attributes such as gender, class, sexual orientation, immigration status, etc. determines our ability to live and survive as well as the quality of our lives. This intersection of race with other cultural and world issues such as antisemitism, sexism, the role of merit, diversity, equity, and inclusion in academia and corporate boardrooms is currently being fiercely debated and fought about. Generational and cultural changes are turbulent and require our attention, awareness, as well as new relational and community tools and tactics. We need to reckon with our shared responsibilities towards our fellow humans we have marginalized and exploited. We need to cultivate our kinship across differences and diversity, engage in meaningful relationships and dialogues, deploy solidarity, provide reconciliation and reparations, and develop more equitable systems. Thus, racism, and any other forms of oppression, are ecologically relevant for us humans and require our attention and care.

²³ *Umwelt* is a term that the German biologist Jakob von Uexküll used to describe how living beings perceive their environment(s) and experience their lives in species-specific subjective reference frames.

²⁴ Epigenetic regulation of gene expression is how our environment or *Umwelt* interacts with our biology. Individual and social stress reduces our bodies' abilities to cope and fend off disease and death.

We also share our world with many other-than-human worlds and many don't include us at all. Humans are not the only game in town. We need to acknowledge that there are numerous overlapping worlds with which we are entangled. We need to move beyond enlightenment and expand our scientific beliefs that there is a singular framework for objectively interpreting the world. This one world or universe fallacy contributed to the dominance of the global north and within its societies the consolidation of power among dominant groups. The imposition of a unified interpretation of the world and of finding truth and meaning in a single world by a minority of white men in power is behind the great malaise of our age: the marginalization of so many of our fellow humans and of the more-than-human space and experience. White supremacy is closely linked to human supremacy. It has led to where we stand today at the precipice of human extinction and social upheavals. But in truth, there are so many worlds. Our world is one of many worlds. There are multiplicity of worlds, the pluriverse²⁵, a world where many worlds fit, where many *Umwelts* intersect with each other to varying degrees. The fact that we share many aspects of them, that we feel the same sun and breathe the same air, that we exist together allows for a new solidarity with the more-than-human world.

Our world doesn't fit neatly together and this is also why we have a pluralism of values.²⁶ The British philosopher Isaiah Berlin stated that there

²⁵ Thank you Max Schupach for introducing me to the pluriverse concept.

²⁶ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Value_pluralism

is no one moral good and if we choose one good we sacrifice a piece of another. The value tensions play out in the public sphere as well as internally. There is no one right solution rather a process of conversations and concessions, a give and take to find an important common ground and forming unity in diversity.

One way of engaging with the *pluriverse*, the value conflicts, the many more than human contexts and *Umwelts*, is to decenter ourselves as humans and develop more respect for other forms of beings or persons, intelligences, and mindedness. Decentering is a complex task which requires us to deeply value our relationships with the more-than-human world and to understand the impact our actions and behaviors have upon our shared environments. It requires us to acknowledge our unknowing and limitations and respect those aspects of the worlds that are beyond our understanding.

Here are some examples of extraordinary plant mindedness and agency. Rock cress plants hear approaching caterpillars that feed on them (even though they don't have any receptors for sound waves) and then react by flooding their leaves with chemical defenses intended to ward off the predators. Some mimosa plants are very sensitive to touch and recoil. Extraordinarily they also learn from experience and remember. When they are exposed to repetitive harmless threats, they stop rolling up their leaves and can retain that new knowledge over time. This means that plants can feel, hear, learn, remember, and change their behavior in response to their world.

As we engage with the *pluriverse* of the more-than-human worlds around us, our minds change, we are changed. Our perception and understanding of the world changes from seeing only objects to experiencing animated subjects. With the new revelations of plant subjectivity, agency and mindedness the degree of separation between us and the world shrinks. The multiplicity and entanglement of worlds and umwelts gives space for new sensibilities, relationships, and ethics of engagement. We are embedded in a spirited more-than-human world. For us humans, cultural imaginations and social arrangements are part of our *Umwelt*, both beautiful and devastating. The way we live them is ecologically relevant to us and to our fellow more-than-human beings. It will determine the healthspan and lifespan of all of us.

This new ethics of relating in a human context that is diverse and embedded in a more-than human world requires new cultural imaginations.

I define *Culture* in the broadest sense as information and communication that influences our lives to include both human and more than human spaces. Examples are: your bodies' cultures that are formed between bacterial guest and the host cells, the entanglements with all the more than human worlds around you, your bodies' cultural differences as expressed through body symptoms and experiences, your inner cultures with your dreaming, creative, and spiritual minds, your inner cultures through family and community norms and values, your external community cultures across racial, gender, age, class, sexual orientation differences, your community cultures

as foreigners, immigrants, and refugees, your personal and community cultures with your natural and ecological environments, your global cultures across the global north and the global south, etc.

I define *Imagination* as the ways we are seeing, encountering, and valuing the human and the more than human worlds. This includes our purpose or consensus reality-oriented thoughts, experiences, and behaviors as well as our creative, poetic, dreaming, and spiritually oriented ones. It bridges into our relationships with more than human persons. Imagination is process-oriented, it is about possibilities, not facts or states. Imagination doesn't pretend to know it all, it has no absolute standpoint, it is never absolutely right or completely wrong. It cannot see everything but is open to exploration and curiosity. Imagination is compassionate, it never takes one side but weaves opposites together. It works at the threshold between our inner and outer worlds and awakens in us the recognition of the sacredness of all the difference that is. It opens new destinations and graces us with new beginnings. Imagination is the primal well of our creativity that awaits us to give birth to it and let it blossom in the world.

The source of imagination is what Arnold Mindell calls *Process Mind*,²⁷ Amy Mindell—*The Dreaming Source of Creativity*.²⁸ Others might call it consciousness or Goddess, a fundamental organizing principle, an Old Truth, the Tao that cannot be spoken.

²⁷ Arnold Mindell. *Process Mind*. Quest Books, Wheaton, IL, 2010

²⁸ Amy Mindell. *The Dreaming Source of Creativity*. Lao Tse Press, Portland, OR, 2005.

Cultural Imagination includes the practical and pragmatic social arrangements that create injustice and inequity in health, economic resources, and access to power. They require acknowledgement, transparency, accountability, power sharing, reparation, and justice. From a Process Work perspective, it also includes the layers of incapacitation, illness, wintering, weathering, and trauma that have their own teachings from which individuals and communities can grow. Lastly there is a common ground level to cultural imagination that speaks to our co-evolution among humans and with more than human persons and being part of a larger whole that is inclusive of both diversity and commonality.

The new process-oriented ethics require us also to amend our conventional aims of achieving and our focus on performance, merit, and health to include an invitation to and conversation with incapacitation and illness. The heroic pursuit of goals and achievements is meant to vanish sooner or later. As our abilities desert us, we are forced to welcome failing. We are forced to learn to live with limitations, illness, and incapacities. Enhanced cultural imaginations are now embracing the cultural landscapes of illness, failures, poor outcomes, and incapacities. These marginalized forms of living have their own morality and value. By prioritizing achievements and health, we lose the teachings that we can receive from these other forms of living. The anthropologist Margaret Mead said that: "Helping someone else through difficulty is where civilization starts." A 15,000-year-old healed fractured femur that recorded the care of a wounded fellow human represented for her

the birth of civilization. Today, our wounded fellow human- and more-than human persons are many, and how we care for them and the environment they live in will determine the future of our existences. A new expanded ethics of care, compassion, solidarity, and collaboration and an imagination and creativity that is inclusive of all our frailties and incapacities will hopefully help us address the cultural and ecological crises of our times.

By expanding human identity to embrace a wider, ecological self that isn't separate from or superior to the rest of life, we create the conditions for co-existence, co-survival, and striving. Our minds and bodies, while living and interacting with our environments, are creating experiences, images, fantasies, and living realities that can speak to us. We need new process-oriented communication skills to comprehend the multitude of animated experiences from the trees, mountains, waves, birds, the asthmas, cancers, strokes and heart attacks, the job losses, relational and community conflicts, etc. Our more-than-human neighbors and our frailties, vulnerabilities, and challenges are new territories that, with a new process awareness, we can discover, interact with, and learn from. We can let the phenomena speak, and with a mythopoetic imagination, discover the Spirit, Essence, or Process Mind behind all of it.

Imagination is also most active and warranted at the threshold of otherness. Confronted with difference, uncertainty, and something frighteningly new, we are thrown into a frontier, a border to an unknown terrain. This requires us to

launch into a new creative endeavor and adventure to explore the as-yet-unknown territory. When becoming seriously ill, for example, we are forced to negotiate everything as if we are starting a new kind of life. Our new allies and tour guides are the chronically ill who carried illness for decades in places we stayed away from. Our collective shunning of incapacitation and ultimately death has impoverished us morally and spiritually. By banishing what is most ineffectual inside and outside into exile, we are foreclosing ourselves from a mystical creativity.

In the human realm, other thresholds of otherness that call for (besides systemic change) more conversations and imagination are between the privileged and the poor, the woke and the Trump supporters, the rural people and the city dwellers, the healthy and the sick, the young and the old, the powerful and the marginalized, the refugees and the natives, the colonizers and the exploited.

The new ethos will require that we get out of our own selfish point of view and develop the ability to absorb, understand, and inhabit the views of “the other,” in our own bodies, in our social and biological environments and cultures. As studies on baboons have shown, social malleability and cultural transmission of new forms of collaboration is possible within short time frames.²⁹

²⁹ Robert M. Sapolsky. Peace Among Primates. Anyone who says peace is not part of human nature knows too little about primates, including ourselves. Greater Good Magazine. September 1, 2007. https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/peace_among_primates

It requires a change in environments, especially a decrease in individual and social stress. Maybe Nature and the *pluriverse* have something to teach us, they help us emancipate ourselves within nature and preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the human and more-than human community. There are no final right answers to these important questions, so history remains a conversation that has no end. And as physicist Richard Feynman told his friend the cellist Yo-Yo Ma: “Nature has the greatest imagination of all.”³⁰

³⁰ Maria Popova. Atoms with Consciousness: Yo-Yo Ma Performs Richard Feynman’s Ode to the Wonder of Life, Animated. <https://www.themarginalian.org/2022/04/22/richard-feynman-yo-yo-ma/>

Ancestors and Animism: Process Work as a Way to “Do” Cultural Repair

LAURA HARTNELL³¹

*I am lying on the floor. Eyes closed,
breathing. My heart and hips and belly sink
into the Earth. I invoke a spirit guide, an
ally, to hold my ritual practice—to cleanse
my space and offer a layer of protection.
I am no meditator, but I have done this
practice dozens of times over the past year.
I am shifting my assemblage point, sinking
into the Sentient level, opening myself up to
the universe’s unknowable entanglements,
and reaching through space and time, to
meet with my ancestors.*

*Their bodies are hazy, otherworldly. I sense
them as a weight in the air, a simultaneous
pulling both inwards and outwards, a
pleasant pressure. They gather around me,
a silver-blue energetic cloud that wavers
in the corners of my vision like shimmering
heat. A force field of family.*

³¹ Dr. Laura Hartnell was born in Australia, and her ancestors come from the British Isles. She is currently a Process Work Diplomate student at ANZPOP, as well as a facilitator, academic, and educator. She works with individuals and communities, mostly in the education and health care sectors, on projects that broadly seek to enhance creativity and collaboration in service of social justice outcomes. Her academic research investigates writing and creative practice as socioculturally resistive and transformative activities.

In mainstream, Western culture, openly admitting that you connect across time and space with your ancestors is an edgy thing to do. While you might discuss genealogy or your recent Ancestry.com DNA test at the dinner table, it is another thing entirely to mention you regularly chat to your ancestors. To do so is to risk critics—internal and external—labeling you as “weird,” “crazy,” or too “woo woo.” But ancestral connection is a form of inner work and Worldwork that has the power to subvert the underlying assumptions of modern Western culture and offer tools and connections that might contribute to repairing it.

Centuries of colonization has left many people in Western culture cut off from their ancestral lineage, resulting (amongst other things) in a disconnect from our cultural histories. This disconnect is foundational to a harmful Western culture that values extraction over regeneration, domination over collaboration, individualism over collectivism, mind over body, thought over feelings, and the supremacy of human beings over other-than-human beings. As a white settler of English, Irish, and Scottish ancestry, I am dismayed by the culture I have inherited. But if I trace my lineage back far enough, my ancestral line—anyone’s ancestral line—connects back to an indigenous, pre-colonial culture. The knowledge that, centuries ago, my family was part of a culture that lived in greater connection with the Earth, embraced ritual and myth, and openly journeyed to other levels of reality, changes how I understand

my lineage and my relationship to history.³² While, in my case, the Celtic cultures of my ancestors have been mostly lost to time, the connection between them and me is an important part of how I understand myself. It is also an important part of how I situate myself in a broken Western culture and how I might contribute to repairing it by coming into greater connection with the Earth and my own ritual practice.

Ancestral Lineage Healing—a course taught online by ritualist and psychologist Dr. Daniel Foor—has been formative to my growing practice as a Process Worker.³³ The course teaches a step-by-step process for connecting with ancestors—underpinned by ritual safety—designed to work with them to heal the familial line across time and develop a reciprocal relationship between the dead and the living. Foor teaches that “living human people are just one kind of person in a much wider field of kinship or relatedness or interconnectedness.”³⁴ Connecting with ancestors is much like any other relationship; it requires time, attention, reciprocity, and ongoing nurturing. Through a kind of meditation practice, ancestral lineage healing involves establishing a connection on the Sentient level of reality with the spirits of the many generations that came before us.

³² For a research-informed and rigorous deep dive into ancient Celtic culture, see Sharon Blackie’s work, particularly her online course *Celtic Studies: Myth, Tradition, Spirituality*: <https://sharonblackie.net/celtic-studies-myth-and-tradition/>

³³ See Daniel Foor’s website, <https://ancestralmedicine.org/>, for more on his work and to enroll in courses.

³⁴ Foor, Daniel. “Lesson One Full Transcript”, *Ancestral Lineage Healing Course, July 2022*. <https://ancestralmedicine.org/courses/ancestors2022j/>.

Note: transcript is behind paywall.

The aim is to connect with the old, wise, and well ancestors in one’s lineage, to speak with them and to understand their wisdom. Eventually, these wise ancestors will extend healing to the more recent dead who still need to be fully received in their role as ancestors. The outcome is a healthier, more connected ancestral line that not only has connections to the living but to the indigenous knowledge of pre-colonial times. In time, a meaningful relationship with the ancestors can extend healing and guidance to the living and to future generations.

For me, ancestral lineage healing is not only a reconnection to my long-dead family; it is also an embodiment of my animist worldview—the belief that plants, animals, places, elements, objects, and the dead have a spirit and agency. In a white, Western context, both Process Work and animism are radical interventions into an anthropocentric culture that treats human beings as more valuable than other-bodied beings. The more connected I feel with my ancestors, the more I have started bringing animism into my everyday life. Animism was a core tenet of my family’s indigenous Celtic culture, and openly embracing it in the here and now helps me feel more connected to them, more like myself. So, I talk to plants and animals on the street; I ask people what their relationship to place is like; I insist the Earth is an agential being, not a passive object. It’s about situating myself within a broader ecology of being, in which humans are only one kind of person, in relationship with a broader web of other-bodied people. Animist beliefs often sit uncomfortably in a Western culture intent on treating the Earth and its beings

as nothing but a resource for human consumption. But more and more, I will ease myself over that cultural edge. And as I do, I'm not only honoring my ancestors and their—our—animist worldview, but I am enacting cultural repair.

Cultural repair is a concept introduced to me by Liz Scarfe—Process Work Diplomate and Executive Director of ANZPOP, where I am undertaking my own Diplomate training—whose practice of “collaborative learning for cultural repair” has been foundational to my understanding of Process Work and my ongoing training in the modality.³⁵ As Liz explains, cultural repair is an “amorphous idea... There isn't a [single] way to do it” but a good place to start, she says, is “really understanding the nature of the wound. What is it that you think is broken... or needs changing in your culture?”³⁶ Cultural repair is about contributing to repairing those wounds, by noticing what you feel called to work on. It's about following your process.

In 2023, Liz facilitated her inaugural Cultural Repair Practice Group, a program that brought a group of people together who felt called towards cultural repair, to learn collaboratively about the many ways we might enact it. The Cultural Repair Practice Group was made up of an eclectic but wonderful group of about ten people. While it wasn't officially advertised as a Process Work

³⁵ Liz's website is the best place to go for more about collaborative learning for cultural repair, including videos and blog posts that explore cultural repair in more detail, through a Process Work-oriented lens.

³⁶ “How to Do Cultural Repair - Step 1.” Liz Scarfe. May 25, 2023. YouTube Video, 0:01:13, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AvhmWkJ3W4Q&t=188s>.

group, it was underpinned by the principles of process-oriented facilitation and many of us were aware of the modality. We met on Zoom once a month for six months without a strict agenda, except to explore the concept of cultural repair together; in short, we followed our process.

It became clear almost immediately that cultural repair is its own dreamfigure: a shapeshifter that is full of both sweeping revolutions and tiny, private acts. We let ourselves be dreamed up a little by this figure, allowing it to show us new possibilities. We let go of our ideas of what cultural repair “should” be and set out to discover it in an embodied, experiential way. Cultural repair in our group shifted with each person, often changing from moment to moment. In a single session, it might have manifested as reconciliation between white Australians and First Nations people, or a prayer to a plant, or a discussion about trans rights, or a hand-knitted pair of socks. As Vicki, one of our group members, summarizes: “We sort of made up our own theory of cultural repair in the end...that it's lots of different little things, like a drop in the pond that reverberates out...It was experiential learning.”³⁷ The group's field expanded to hold multiple possibilities and allowed us to imagine alternative ways of being, knowing, and doing. This was a space where we could have conversations and relationships that were routinely disavowed by our Western culture. We were engaging with an amorphous concept, learning collaboratively by sharing our diverse perspectives. We were crossing our cultural edges together.

³⁷ Vicki Henricks, in discussion with the author, Jan 31, 2024.

In one group meeting, my ears pricked up when one of our group members, Crowe, mentioned that she had also done Foor’s Ancestral Lineage Healing course. I had enrolled in the twelve-week course a year earlier and was still slowly working my way through it. Perhaps Crowe could give me some advice. We met one-on-one on Zoom, and Crowe told me about her experience; I told her about mine. I asked questions. She gave advice. I learned from her. She asked about my practice. She talked about her journey through the course, explaining how she healed her ancestral lines. She spoke lovingly about her ongoing relationship with a tree outside her home, how it might say hello to her sometimes by brushing its leaves on her cheek, even when she wasn’t nearby. It was relieving and humbling to be in conversation with this older woman, who understood the kind of cultural repair work I was trying to do, and who offered support and encouragement as my elder. I did not have to explain myself or worry that she’d think I was strange for talking to spirits. We were meeting each other as animists.

The Cultural Repair Practice Group was the first time I have publicly encountered other adults who were willing to meaningfully engage with animism as a worldview. As a group of people living in a Western culture, to engage with animism in public is to cross a cultural edge. In one meeting, bolstered by my supportive fellow animists, I crossed my personal edge and offered a kind of prayer for the plant people in our homes. This incantation turned out to be formative to another participant, Tathra, who says, “Being in a group of people who have animistic beliefs or

leanings changed the way I relate to my plants and my animals and my environment. I feel more supported and connected. I feel like my ancestors are talking through... the birds and the trees and the sky.”³⁸ Tathra’s own animist worldview and connection with her ancestors was strengthened by being in community with other animists; when one of us goes over an edge, others can follow. Through relationships—mine with Crowe, Tathra with me—we were modeling to each other how to be animist and how to connect with our ancestors, despite being immersed in a culture that disavows it. Our group field expanded and settled into a shape that allowed us to hold new possibilities and imagine new ways of being in the world. When we cross edges together that resist—even threaten—the dominant culture, we shift our individual and collective relationships with the world and enact cultural repair. Over time, animism and ancestral connection emerged in the group as a key theme in our understanding of cultural repair. Foor’s work—both on animism and ancestral lineage healing—came up again and again. Some of us took ancestral DNA tests; others began relating differently with the plants and animals near our homes. We reported back to the group on how this had changed our connection to place, to our ancestors, to our homes and friends and inner lives. Our container was expanding, allowing more parts of ourselves and our cultural heritage to be reclaimed from marginalization.

Through process-oriented facilitation, Liz created a “safe-enough learning space” where we could explore our individual and shared dreaming

³⁸ Tathra Street, in discussion with the author, Feb 2, 2024.

without judgment.³⁹ This was deep democracy in action. The Cultural Repair Practice group became a place where sentient experiences could be normalized; we embodied the deeply democratic belief “that all levels of consciousness are also of equal value and should also have equal representation.”⁴⁰ This alone is a reparative act in a Western culture that routinely denies anything outside Consensus Reality. The group enabled a radical form of relationality—both between human and other-than-human people—that could be integrated across all three levels of reality. Our exploration of animism helped connect us with other-than-human people, including ancestors, on Dreamland and Sentient levels. The human-to-human relationships of the group itself helped us celebrate our learnings in Consensus Reality and integrate them into our daily lives and primary identities. The Cultural Repair Practice Group fundamentally changed how I view myself and my place in the world. It brought me closer to my ancestors. It introduced me to other human people who will ask after my ancestors, in the same way they might ask after my living family. This is profoundly healing, both personally and culturally, and makes me feel seen in my ongoing practice of cultural repair.

³⁹ Liz Scarfe, “Safe Enough Learning Spaces – how to create them,” *Liz Scarfe: collaborative learning for cultural repair*, accessed Feb 7, 2024, <https://lizscarfe.net/create-safe-enough-learning-spaces/>. See also Liz’s video on the topic of safe enough learning spaces: “The problem with ‘safe spaces’”: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qOORrT32ueM>

⁴⁰ Arnold Mindell, *Processmind: A User’s Guide to Connecting with the Mind of God* (Illinois: Theosophical Publishing House, 2010), chap. 7, Kindle.

But cultural repair is also uncomfortable, as dancing on edges always is. As I continue my ancestral connection practices, I am invited to scrutinize my own family and identity and find ways to reconcile my ancestral lineage as a colonizer. My ancestors are settlers to Australia; they left Celtic homelands, where generations before they had been dispossessed of their own indigenous culture, and sailed to the other side of the world to settle in a nation state founded on the dispossession and genocide of Aboriginal people. My family is implicated in the ongoing harms of colonization; in connecting with my ancestors, I have to continually face these realities in an embodied way. I have to reckon with my place both as a white settler born in Australia and as a person with indigenous connections to the British Isles, where my family also lost their connection to land and spiritual practices. At the moment, this means learning from and listening to First Nations activists, artists, and scholars—both in Australia and around the world—who embody animist and regenerative values in ways that make change, in community with others. I tend to favor introversion, but as I grow stronger in my ancestral and animist practices, I’m finding my spirituality is informing my Worldwork. Where I can, I bring it more overtly into my undergraduate teaching and facilitation practices, as well as my ongoing Process Work studies. Oh, and I’ve taken up crocheting and birdwatching—simple, slow acts that reconnect me with the making practices of my ancestors and the land that I call home.

I am still working on how my ancestral reverence practice might further inform my work in Consensus Reality, particularly when it comes

to reconciliation between white and Indigenous Australians. If I were to name an ongoing cultural repair project, it would be about how to bring the internal and the external together: how can my connection to ancestors and cultural lineage help me show up more responsibly with the power and privilege I have in the world? I'm working on it. What I do know is that, through its commitment to animist beliefs, multiple levels of reality, and deep democracy, Process Work emerges as a modality that can "do" cultural repair both through group facilitation and within individuals' lives. Process Work helps us imagine alternative ways of being, knowing, and doing and encourages us to integrate them into the world—on all levels of reality and in meaningful relationships with many-bodied people.

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Extrawurst—or How New Things Come into the World: Process Work in the Context of Negotiation processes of a rural development project

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In Advance

The following story is based on my diploma thesis, which I submitted to the Deep Democracy Institute in 2021. At its center is a rural development project that our German group “Extrawurst”⁴² successfully launched in 2019. The guiding question of my thesis was whether Process Work can also be helpful in such a context. Did it help me in my role as project manager? How can it help to support something new that we wanted to bring into the world? The process we developed for the low-stress slaughter of cattle on the farm was new. In order for it to be introduced to the world, current legislation in Germany had to be allowed to be interpreted more flexibly.

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⁴² The term “Extrawurst” can literally be translated as “special sausage” or better “something special or to treat s.a. specially or s.o gets a special treatment.” In Germany, “Extrawurst” is a special term for an “extra wish” that is reluctantly granted. Traditionally, children were denied this “extra sausage;” they were not supposed to step out of line or have any extra wishes.

It would be even better if the European Union really changed the legal situation. At the center of the negotiation processes initiated by the project were, on the one hand, farmers with cattle farms who wanted to apply the procedure and governmental institutions (competent veterinary authorities) who had to monitor compliance with the applicable law. Other actors included cattle and technology, each with its own language. Unlike in group processes and Worldwork, we therefore also had very specific actors involved. This drove my question forward: is PW also possible under conditions of regional development?

The Result Right at the Beginning

It’s December 21, 2020, and Dr. I., the veterinarian officer involved in the project, calls me. The EU was now allowing slaughter on the farm! I cried. We hadn’t expected such a far-reaching change in the law. We knew that something was moving at EU level. Realistically, our aim had only been to improve the interpretation of the current legal situation. That the European Commission would now go far beyond what seemed possible to us was unimaginable. My tears opened my eyes to the endless web and group of people, animals, and devices involved in this change. I could clearly see in my mind’s eye countless entanglements, relationships, their disputes, the joint struggles, trials and failures, as well as the small and larger successes over the last fifteen years.

It took a lot of patience, failure, and learning, and the road to finally receiving sufficient project funding⁴³ was long and part of the process.

Only today can I also say that without me, neither the project nor the legal change would have come about. But precisely this and the countless external and, above all, internal hurdles and boundaries (edges) associated with it would not have been overcome without process-oriented training and facilitation. The zeitgeist of animal welfare needed me and my role in building bridges. My deepest thanks therefore go to my coach, teacher, and supervisor Dr. Max Schupbach—he enabled me to take on this previously missing role and to facilitate my inner and outer team on this basis. I would now like to talk about this.

Slaughter on the Farm

The new thing that our “Extrawurst” project wanted to bring into the world was actually something old: the slaughtering of animals on farms. It is old because pigs, cows, calves, bulls, laying hens, ducks, and geese were slaughtered on farms until well into the 1960s, and the meat was processed and sometimes sold on the farms as well. This home slaughtering still exists today—but the meat may not be sold locally (in official German: “placed on the market”). Step by step, the legislator—initially the Federal Republic

⁴³ After years of unsuccessful attempts, these project funds were approved in 2017 and paid out from an EU innovation fund, co-financed by the state of Hesse.

of Germany and, since the 1980s, the European legislator—has enforced this limit⁴⁴.

If the meat and the products made from it were to be marketed, the animals could only be slaughtered in slaughterhouses (butchers, municipal, or private slaughterhouses). Since 2004, all slaughterhouses, including small butchers’ shops, have required EU approval. The EU has issued directly applicable regulations in all EU member states.

The aim was to save the cattle from having to be transported to the abattoir. In order to comply with the legal situation, we had the following considerations:

There is no going back to the old home slaughter. But it is also too expensive and too time-consuming to set up an EU approved slaughterhouse on the farm. In order to avoid live transportation of the animals, only the first stages of slaughter should take place on the farm and above all in the animal’s familiar surroundings: restraining the animal, stunning it, and finally killing it by bleeding. Then the killed animal (hygienically wrapped and still in its fur!) should be driven to the cooperating slaughterhouse.

⁴⁴ After 1945, it became national, German law. In 1986, it was gradually harmonized with the establishment of the Single European Market, initially through directives that the member states had to translate into national law. As a result of the BSE crisis (mad cow disease), the law was standardized at the European level and direct hygiene regulations have been in force since 2004. The member states no longer have much room for maneuver but are allowed to apply these regulations more strictly than the European Union guidelines provide.

Only there are all further slaughter steps carried out, which also require a great deal of hygiene (skinning, gutting, cutting, chilling). The EU hygiene regulation,⁴⁵ which regulates slaughter in terms of food safety, prohibits the delivery of dead animals to the slaughterhouse. It says: Only live animals may be taken to the slaughterhouse! Understandable—who wants animals that have died during transportation in the food chain?

The trick was as follows: The restraint and stunning of the animal should take place on the farm and thus in familiar surroundings. The stunned, but not yet killed, animal is then immediately pulled into the slaughter and transport trailer and killed there by bleeding. This trailer has to be first declared a mobile slaughter unit and approved by the authorities as a mobile part of the EU-approved slaughterhouse to which the cattle are to be driven and further processed. This would have cleverly circumvented the regulation that no dead animal may be brought into the slaughterhouse.

This procedure already applies to cattle that have had an accident and are killed on the farm due to a broken leg, for example, and may then be driven dead to the slaughterhouse. In Germany in 2011, agricultural pioneers⁴⁶ also succeeded in ensuring

⁴⁵ Regulation (EC) No. 853/2004 of April 29, 2004 laying down specific hygiene rules for food of animal origin.

⁴⁶ A strong farmers' initiative achieved a legal change in Germany in 2011 (Without the consent of the EU!) and cattle that live outdoors all year round have since been allowed to be stunned with a bullet on the pasture and then killed and thus brought dead to the slaughterhouse. § Section 12 of the national Animal Food Hygiene Regulation allowed these cattle to be brought to the slaughterhouse dead. The transport vehicle therefore did not require EU approval at the time.

that all free-range cattle, for example those who graze all year in nature conservancy areas, can be stunned and killed with a gunshot and then transported dead to the slaughterhouse. The novelty of our project is that we wanted to implement this procedure as a possible standard procedure for all healthy cattle. The social activist in me did not understand why, if the first possible steps had already been taken, this good innovation should not benefit all cattle, including dairy cows and beef cattle that not only graze on pastures but are also sometimes kept indoors. Why was there such a long and fierce resistance? Why did every attempt to bring such a project to life fail over many years?

Hence the tears—when this legal limit was actually lifted for all Member States in 2021, and not just for cattle, but also for pigs and horses, and soon also for sheep and goats.

Timespirits and Old Conflicts in the Field Failure

The social activist in me first learned how to fail. She didn't understand why a good idea—more animal welfare in cattle slaughter—was met with so much resistance. Don't we all want the "good?"

In the beginning, my colleague, Hans from Gut Breitenstein—himself a cattle farmer and beef direct marketer—and I were on our own. In 2010, we founded an association and joint consultancy project to help farmers, who marketed meat, deal with the relevant legislation. So in a sense, we were already "in the middle" of the issue of conflict between farmers, butchers, and the

veterinary authorities. From the very beginning, the idea of making slaughtering a less stressful option for humans and animals had been on the table. Hans experienced this stress on a weekly basis: separating the individual cattle from the herd, loading it into the transporter, and then transporting it to the slaughterhouse. It is particularly anxiety-inducing and therefore stressful for cattle when they have to be led into the slaughter room and restrained there. Some escape, injure the butchers, run through the slaughterhouse or onto the street, cannot be caught and have to be killed. If all this could be dispensed with, it would be good for the animals, the people, and also for the quality of the meat because you can taste the animals' stress and fear.

So I set out and wrote a project application every year for four years in order to get funding. The answer was always a terse "We will reject your application" which meant: "The EU doesn't allow such a procedure."

I knew the dissenting voices well. For many years, I had traveled all over Germany with Lea T, a pioneer of pasture-based slaughter, and facilitated one-day seminars on "low-stress slaughter." The farmers said in unison, "I want to take this last step with my animals; I raised them and I want to spare them and myself this stress." The few butchers at the seminars, on the other hand, felt that their professional honor had already been attacked by the topic. All they heard was the accusation that they were not slaughtering animals well and were not respecting animal welfare. However, the main resistance came from the veterinarians.

Their resistance was deep and also extended—with all their might (even today)—to the method of stunning and killing cattle on pasture by bullet shot, which has been permitted since 2011. So the legal situation alone did not make sense of the resistance.

To understand this, I had to dig deep into their history. Their life myth or founding myth provided the decisive clue.

The modern profession of the veterinarian in charge of animal hygiene, which emerged in the late 19th century, came into being with the discovery of the bacterial causes of animal diseases and spoiled meat. Controls had to be established as the transformation from an agrarian to an industrial society and urbanization led to a decline in self-sufficiency and an increase in external supply via traders, urban markets, consumer cooperatives, and stores. Special controls not only on compliance with market regulations, but also on the entire sale of livestock and meat became necessary in order to contain animal diseases and epidemics that could be transmitted to humans. Municipal abattoirs became the controllable bottleneck of the urban meat supply, and city butchers had to slaughter only within these municipal slaughterhouses. State-employed veterinarians became the "masters" of these municipal slaughterhouses. To this day, they and the authorities are proud to have fought the livestock epidemics and of their role as state-appointed guardians of food hygiene and safety. Further, consumer protection became ever stronger with the expansion of the

German, European, and global meat markets. This dependence on the judgment of the authority whether a slaughterhouse complies with EU rules and is therefore approved or not, is central to our project. A veterinarian once angrily expressed this founding myth to me as follows: “We took slaughter away from the dung heap - and now you want to reintroduce it.” Then I understood: our concern hurts their pride, their professional honor. From their point of view, the farm is always dirty. They represent good, white, clean hygiene. Animal welfare has only been added as a task in recent years.

The rank of the veterinarians who belong to the authority is correspondingly high. They represent the government, the law, and, therefore, the power. A butcher or farmer always faces the authority as a petitioner when they apply for approval of their business. It monitors compliance with the legal regulations and can therefore also withdraw approval. As the saying goes, it always has the “upper hand.” It controls market access. Without market access, there are no sales, no income, no livelihood.

Old Conflicts

Conflicts between farmers who sell meat directly and the veterinary authorities are as old as the first market laws at the end of the 19th century. While farmers and butchers were still predominantly involved in supplying consumers back then, both play an extremely marginal role today—especially when it comes to supplying consumers with meat (as with all other products, especially

milk etc.). Farmers today are mostly producers of raw materials; meat comes from the meat plant and is available in the self-service counters of supermarkets, which have displaced the butchers.

The conflicts between self-marketing farmers/butchers and the veterinary authorities that control them are exacerbated by the legislation itself. These are not neutral; they have an effect on the economic players, tend to favor one and make it more difficult for the other to operate. This is because the legislation on food hygiene follows the changes in the economy and seeks to limit their hygiene risks. They support the mainstream, so to speak: away from the small village butcher’s shop towards globally operating meat corporations with large, centralized slaughterhouses. The majority of animals are killed, cut up, and their meat processed or sold there at high (assembly line) speed, efficiently and with a strong division of labor. Artisanal killing and slaughtering has become marginal today. Legislation essentially safeguards the hygiene risks of industrialized-globalized meat markets. Therefore, artisans often have to meet standards that do not correspond to their risks or their work processes.

The Marginalized Develop Resistance

The field in which we were drawn into with our project can be divided into roles that include all the players. To capture the global nature of these roles, Arnold Mindell developed in 1992 the concept of *timespirits*. These timespirits are like dream figures that draw us into their energy. Mindell wanted to make it clear that a role taken on by

people or a group is always only temporary and does not permanently stick to them personally.⁴⁷ When timespirits give voice to the marginalized, they have an energy that transforms the world. Timespirits are therefore to be seen as processes.⁴⁸

Our old conflicts, which were also evident in the project, are driven by the timespirit, the “reappropriation of peasant autonomy.” It is old and, especially in Germany, draws on the traditional experiences of the uprisings and peasant revolts of the 16th century. Resistance is part of peasant life and work. Farming itself is even deeply connected to resistance as working in and with nature requires not only humility (weather!) but also great resilience. Much has to be wrestled from nature. Resistance to domination and veterinary authorities is a form of power.

What’s more:

As I write this, the large nationwide tractor demonstration of farmers against the subsidy cuts of the GREEN Ministry of Agriculture and Economics, scheduled for January 8, is forming.

The reappropriation of farmers’ autonomy and, in particular, the reappropriation of direct sales of food (and not raw material) was always

⁴⁷ Mindell, *The Leader as Martial Artist*, San Francisco 1992, p. 21ff He deliberately introduces a new concept of timespirits here, as the concept of “role” is often understood too narrowly, as if the people or groups who currently fulfill this role were personally responsible for it. But roles are not static, they change over time, sometimes they even disappear or change their energy from gentle to aggressive or vice versa. Unfortunately, this equation of role with *timespirit* is abandoned in the further development of Process Work.

⁴⁸ Schupbach, *Worldwork*, p. 61.

associated with crossing borders or violating rules and regulations in order to bring something new into the world. This is how organic farming came about, as well as the independent regional development movement: no supplies of raw materials to industry! Let’s sell food directly to consumers, market it directly, and process it ourselves!

Our project was also linked to the longstanding timespirit of animal welfare. With our project, we also addressed the taboo subject of killing animals for food and thus with the voiceless and marginalized farm animals and fellow creatures in our society. The industrialized treatment of farm animals resulted in animal welfare advocacy that became a publicly shrill voice to stop killing and slaughtering and abolish any livestock farming. But we wanted to make killing and slaughtering “better.” We were caught between two stools.

What the F...Am I Doing Here?

With the failure and the conflicts, the question came to the fore: Why am I doing this? Why don’t I let go of this, or vice versa: What is stronger than my “I” and pulls me into this field? The question already came up during the introductions at the seminars. I was not: not a cattle farmer, not a butcher, not a veterinarian. But I kept at it. Was I drawn to something unknown? Did my never really tangible “self” make a conscious decision here? What connects me to the farmers and the animals? Or is there a future here? I remembered being the daughter of a refrigerator manufacturer. In my first year of study of agriculture at

the university in 1974, a group of left-wing agricultural activists had set up a book table in front of the cafeteria. I bought the red and yellow book by Bernhard Lambert, *Peasant in Class Struggle*. The book promised something that the social activist in me couldn't even imagine. To this day, I am and my work is connected to the clever and politically committed farmers. I didn't become a farmer—I became a researcher and writer.

The Process Work gave me a deeper understanding and acceptance of the “pulling from the future” for the first time. It showed me that there is a force at work here that is stronger than my indecisive, wavering, and doubting “I.” It is the processmind; it is the Tao that cannot be said; it is the polar unfolding energies that make my life dance. This dance shows itself in my Childhood Dream, my life myth, which is as intangible, as difficult to put into words, as the Tao itself.

*“Your own awareness shows that your deepest, almost unconscious prayers are organized by the things that catch your attention, by connections to the infinite, the mind of nature. Your mind is entangled with that of God.”*⁴⁹

My recurring childhood dream disturbed me for a long time:

I'm on the top floor of a dark factory floor. My girlfriend (Margret?) is standing next to me. In front of us lie countless wounded soldiers on cots. Bleeding, barely

bandaged legs can be seen. There is great suffering, great shared pain. The end of the dark room cannot be seen and so the cots with the soldiers reach far down into the dark depths of the hall. We just stand there. We are there. We don't say anything, we don't move, we don't do anything. Then I notice that a whole wall is missing to my left. This opens up a view of a high-rise building and the blue sky. I jump out. I wake up as I jump.

I am not just a witness to a world that has just emerged from violent killings shortly before my birth. I have learned to be patient, to live despite the injuries and the suffering. I feel the soldier in me: the soldier doesn't just jump out when it no longer fits or something else beckons, he remains faithful to the task he has set himself. I am less familiar with the suffering and the injured person in the dream. This part didn't fit in with the Swabian pietistic culture of the post-war years. And so the energies clashed for most of my life: the soldier interfered with the freedom-loving, window-jumping one, and the sensitive one interfered with the soldier. Just as my social activist interfered with the researcher in everyday life and vice versa. Reconciliation came when I learned to feel these roles as energies in movement and dance: waiting, grabbing/jumping, or even deeper as music: the operas of Puccini and punk/metal. These energies were finally decoupled from roles that were still imbued with mora and judgmental footnotes. According to Max Schupbach, these energies are: “the part in you that is new and the least known or appreciated and not

⁴⁹ Arnold Mindell, *Quantum Mind*, Oakland California 2000, p. 585 .

understood by your family and by yourself: They are the parts in me that neither I nor my family understand and appear to be an obstacle. They are my allies because they put my personal and cultural history into perspective and thus give me freedom.”⁵⁰

In my dreams, my energies increasingly showed themselves as animals: a dog his/my instinctive side, a wild boar his/my wild, and so often also uncivilized energy, which hurts other people often unintentionally or “behind my back” (secondary). Only later, a monkey was added, my relaxed, detached, and free view of the world. The better I learned to “civilize” my wild boar energy, the easier it was for me to get off the ground and fulfill my dream of acting in the world channel while loving this passionate activity. The more relaxed I was able to accept everything that wanted to show up inside and outside of me, the more I felt at home in myself and in the world. Then I sensed all the forces in the great world structure that are at work simultaneously, in me and with me, against each other and with each other. I am not alone in my actions. I no longer have to do anything; I can let things happen and just be there. The co-creation of the world is a joint affair for the whole world. The “Extrawurst” project needed this dance.

⁵⁰Max Schupbach, oral communication at a DDI seminar in Amsterdam March 2018.

Learning

Understanding the Role

We received another “NO!”—not eligible for funding in the summer of 2015. My colleague Hans and I were so sure this time that we had done everything right with good agreements and explanations in advance, in our own federal state (“where people know each other”) and within the framework of a well-suited EU funding program for “innovations in the agricultural sector.” The administration responsible for agricultural funding was sympathetic to us. Almost pro forma, it obtained the technical approval of the regional veterinary authority. And they said “NO.” We had to withdraw the application so that it was not officially rejected as a result of this “no.” Dr. B. from the agricultural funding department arranged a meeting for spring 2016 with the veterinary administration in the north,⁵¹ which was responsible for the EU approval of slaughterhouses in our region. We knew the head of this authority well and he knew Hans’ farm very well. But now the roles became very clear: we were on the side of the activists, farmers who no longer wanted to transport their animals to the slaughterhouse alive. On the other side was the authority, the guardian of law and food safety, and on the third

⁵¹To understand: In Germany, hygiene law is not uniform throughout the country but is the responsibility of the federal states.(Länder) In each federal state, however, the competent authority to ensure the compliance with the requirements of the EU regulations is structured differently, sometimes centralized, sometimes decentralized. In Hesse, where we work, it is decentralized into local district authorities (veterinary offices), and three regional authorities (competent for EU approval of slaughterhouses) that have “their” area in the north, south, and middle of Hesse. Above them is the department of Meat Hygiene within the Ministry of Agriculture, Environment, and consumer protection.

side was Dr. B, who was interested in our project being supported because he thought it was very innovative. The meeting would probably not have taken place if we had not known and appreciated each other. We discussed the “no” for the first time. Our task, according to Dr. F. from the authority, is to check this mobile slaughterhouse once everything has been built to see whether or not it can receive EU approval as a “mobile part of an EU-approved slaughterhouse.” We replied that we understood this dialog between us and the authority as part of the project and had taken it into account. But the authority said: “We can’t agree to a project in advance, that would be like agreeing to EU approval in advance.”

It became clear to us that a public authority does not enter an intermediate space, groping, searching, exploring the possibilities. Its communication with the world takes place via applications, forms, and decisions. It decides, assesses, controls. It is not possible for the actors to change roles—as is the case in group processes. The authority cannot change its role. The roles of applicant and approval authority are therefore fixed to the applicable legal situation. Anything else would be an area characterized by arbitrariness. One ray of hope was that, for the first time, the EU hygiene regulations in force since 2004 were designed so flexibly by the legislator that they left room for interpretation in favor of artisanal slaughter. Finally the Veterinarians agreed to be part of the project as long as we were obliged to regular meetings with them.⁵²

⁵² The fact that the authorities usually do not make good use of this flexibility and prefer to fall back on the detailed regulations of the old legal situation is another matter.

The project was approved in 2017 and involved representatives from five authorities at three different decision-making levels: the two district veterinarians who control the slaughtering at the two test farms, the two middle, regional authorities responsible for the EU approval of the slaughterhouses in the two regions involved, and the upper level of the ministry with two specialist departments for meat hygiene and animal welfare. Between six and ten people from these authorities sat around the negotiating table. The success had relied on our help facilitating their dynamics, rivalries, and differing views.

Learning the Language of Others

I still hadn’t understood the depth of the NO. I had only learned that the role of the veterinary authority is relatively fixed, that it does not discuss but controls and decides. A new application had to be written.

For the next step, the world helped me: as a representative of our association and an activist in the field of mobile slaughter, I was invited together with other farmer activists to negotiate with Dr. E., the chief veterinarian of the neighboring federal state of Baden-Württemberg. He had been commissioned via political channels⁵³ to set up a nationwide working group of the Federal

⁵³ See also “playing across borders”—I had encouraged a political companion over several years to take up the issue of mobile slaughtering and bring it to the Agriculture Ministers’ Conference so that they could urge the interstate working group of the Chief veterinary authorities to make a decision. It is important to note that veterinary legislation is not implemented uniformly across Germany but is the responsibility of the sixteen German federal states. Therefore, some coordination is required.

State Chief veterinarians on mobile slaughter. He wanted our opinion. He was well-disposed towards us. But we didn't come together. Our conversation went round and round. Only slowly did I begin to understand what logic Dr. E. was following and what logic we were following. Dr. E. started from the legal perspective, we from the concerns of the farmers and animal welfare. We said we wanted to slaughter "close to the farm," which was just a way of marking the location to make it clear that we didn't want any live animals transported to the slaughterhouse. Dr. E., however, heard: "We farmers want to slaughter on the farm" and translated this into the legal context of "If you want home slaughtering, this meat may not be marketed, only eaten by yourselves." We knew the legal situation very well, that wasn't the point. But our language was that of practice, of farmers and butchers. I had to learn to translate our concerns into the logic and language of the veterinary authorities and include the roles as defined by the legislator. Our revised application included more legalistic and complicated sentences. With this new, legally-clear language, our application was finally approved in 2016—under the official condition of dialog with the authorities—and the project could begin in January 2017.

Negotiate

Developing the Inner Team

The development of a mobile slaughter unit (specifically: a trailer in which the cattle can be bled and transported) could begin. The project group was large: numerous farmers and livestock owners, activists and representatives of rural development associations, a slaughter plant constructor, two butchers, Lea with her slaughter trailer company, Dr. I, officer of the district veterinarian office, and me, of course, as the project manager and my office as the "research team" that had submitted the application. The very first meeting between project representatives and the authorities led to a heated argument. A dispute that lasted for almost two years until a decision could be made. We demanded that the cattle to be slaughtered should be allowed to stand close to the barn to be restrained and stunned. It should only be pulled into the slaughter mobile once it has been stunned. In our view, this was the central point for low-stress slaughter, as the cattle remain in their familiar surroundings and are familiar with the restraining equipment from treatments (ear tagging, blood sampling, etc.). In the opinion of the authorities, all slaughter steps should take place within the slaughter mobile, as this is the only way to comply with the regulation "animals must enter the slaughter room alive." The working group of the highest veterinary authorities (see previous section) had allowed restraint and stunning outside "only in exceptional cases." But what is an exception? And who decides? The conflict escalated between me and the veterinarian Dr. L from the regional competent authority in southern Hesse.

It was exactly the right moment to finally get to know the “monster inside me.” “If you want sustainable solutions, you must relate to the ‘monster’ inside and outside. If that monster gets interested in you, you will have more sustainable results and world relationships.”⁵⁴ Time to look at my monster. My monster is called “Want to be right! Arguing! Stay rigid!” It likes to come up in conversations when I’m insecure and don’t feel seen. Inner work was the order of the day. I go into the roles, see myself wrestling with Dr. L. I am in the role of the applicant; she is in the role of the competent authority. She tells me: “I’m the boss and I represent the applicable law. I have the last word.” I reply: “Yes, but I would ask you to consider our animal welfare arguments. Formal decisions don’t get us anywhere.” She replies: “I take this seriously, but my hands are tied.” I took her side for the first time: “I understand that.” She gets personal: “I hear your group’s accusations that I’m impractical and just want to bully them. I admit that I have never led a bull into a hanger in my life, let alone slaughtered one. I don’t know the practice, and I don’t know where it could be done any better. As a woman, these men don’t take any suggestions from me anyway. My only weapons are the legislation, requirements, and controls. I don’t know how I could cooperate with these men.” I then sensed how similar we are. “It’s very similar on my side,” I admitted, “I’m also scared, I don’t know the practices of farmers or butchers; I’m a woman and I’m accused of not having a clue. I too only know the legal situation.”

For the first time, I felt how important the task of Dr. L. and the Veterinary authority is. They have to set boundaries; they also have to be unyielding. I see the responsibility they have and the difficulty of finding ways. I go deeper and feel the power of boundaries, their reliability and safety, the need for guardrails for doing business and living together. In the end, I see the lawyer in me. We will need some time before we can truly appreciate each other. She is my monster. At this time, the monster is starting to take an interest in me, and I decide that I will find solutions that go deeper than “just” speaking each other’s language. I sense the strength of the practitioners, the farmers and butchers and their rank, but also their fear of the authorities. Both are afraid, the practitioner and the veterinarian. I sense the power of language when it is combined with the high rank of a “third party,” which in this case is “The European Union” or “Brussels” for short. “Brussels won’t allow it”—how often have we activists heard this phrase? But “Brussels” does not speak, it is the ghost role in the background. But more on that later.

With my lawyer on the team, I not only learned to understand the legal texts but also discovered my desire to understand them, to want to use them, and to translate them for practical use. But I also discovered their power as a means of fighting. This inner team member made it easier for me to work in the outer team. I was able to empathize with the position of the legislator, accept the limits, endure, mediate, and yet at the same time disturb the status quo. “A powerful instrument,” says the soldier in me.

⁵⁴Mindell, *Leader 2nd Training*, p. 142.

Becoming the Channel of the Other

My inner team was now complete, but the question of why this particular project had drawn me to it still remained unanswered. “It takes courage to let yourself be a potential channel for someone else.”⁵⁵ Anna-Gabryielska Basiu, who accompanied my thesis in such an inspiring way, led me here because I could not go this way alone. It requires companionship, courage, and a deeper letting go of the idea of a more or less fixed identity.

My old identity as a social activist always wanted to shape the world through action but only had the image of the hero and the fight at its disposal. Only the Process Work shows her that action takes place differently—not as a male heroic epic (lonesome cowboy/Superman) but as a subtle process and closely connected with consciousness, awareness and attention, and decision. Flirts on the dream level are allowed; a conscious decision follows to look and then a conscious perception of the other person. The quantum handshake takes place.⁵⁶

Okay says one wave and the other says, “great, okay too.” A mutual touching and being touched. Resonance⁵⁷ as we also call it today. In order to take these steps, some boundaries/edges have to be overcome: I have to get into the river and perceive what I feel. I have to acknowledge the edge and feel that there is information behind it for me and then I have to take the information seriously. The last big edge is to open myself up to the world in such a way that I can bring this new awareness into the world in a helpful way.

I am now beginning to acknowledge my deep love of and resonance with animals and farmers. There are deep connections to our female dogs, the crows in the garden, the hedgehog that occasionally makes its home there, and to the cattle, whose forbearance and wildness, their leaping and deadly strength, and their sluggish rumination are reflected in my life myth. I find the peasant in myself and in people who, like me, unite the rural and the bourgeois—no matter which side they come from.

⁵⁷ According to Hartmut Rosa, *Resonanz*, p. 282 ff., resonance only occurs when the vibration of one body excites the *natural frequency* of the other. This presupposes that the two bodies are not coupled to each other, so that the movement of one body forces a reaction from the other. Each body must be able to speak with “its own voice,” and this can lead to mutual amplification, so that the effect of a vibration impulse can be many times greater than the natural vibration of the first body. Resonance is therefore not an emotional state (ibid., p. 288) but a **relational mode**. In my opinion, there are also points of contact here with Martin Buber’s philosophy: “The creation of the world and the abolition of the world are not in me; but they are also not outside me; they are not at all, they are always happening, and their happening is also connected with me, with my life, my decision, my work, my service.” Martin Buber, *Das dialogische Prinzip*, Gerlingen 1994, p. 95 quoted from Rosa, *Resonanz*, p. 290.

⁵⁵ Arnold Mindell, *The River’s Way*, Portland Oregon 1985/2011, p. 38

⁵⁶ Mindell, *Quantum Mind*, p. 65 ff edited by Josef Helbling, E-Class on “Perception and Marginalization” on 19. 9. 2019.

My inner peasant girl was recognized by them early on but not accepted by me. According to Mindell, I can only recognize love and hate what is in me and what I can find in myself. “Your own awareness shows that your deepest, almost unconscious prayers are organized by the things that catch your attention, by connections to the infinite, the mind of nature. Your mind is entangled with that of God.”⁵⁸ Now the peasant girl is here and says “hello” to farmers, farmers’ wives, farms, tractors, stables, meadows, pastures, and farmland.

What connects me to the farmers is this energy of immersing myself in the subject matter, of completely letting myself in and surrendering and at the same time resisting. I do not spare myself. I go in. I will delve into my experience. I curse and sometimes I lick the wounds. But I can’t let it go. In the evening, I had a long talk with Lea T., who pulled me into this project on the consensus reality level. We feel that we are connected in dreamland. We talk for a long time about the love that connects us to the farmers and butchers and about the roles we play in the everyday world in order to give more space to the good life of the animals and gentle slaughter and respect for the meat.

If you can help all the parties to feel more or less at home, without any further skill, many of the difficulties are already resolved. “Come home, have a cup of tea, do this or that.” If you feel a shared sense of connection with others, that all parts and people are aspects of your universe family, then a kind of community atmosphere helps to resolve problems.

⁵⁸ Mindell, *Quantum*, p. 585.

Can you make a home when you are in a muddle with somebody, with others who you don’t like very much?⁵⁹ Mindell does not differentiate between the *inner parts* and the *people*. My inner voices, my inner team, belong in their diversity to the same big world family as the people around me. Give them a home in me, a feeling of being welcome, no matter what you look like and whether I agree with your opinions.

I feel at home with my team.

Edges— Ghostroles

The aforementioned conflicts between the project and the representatives of the veterinary authorities continued. We struggled with this for two of the three project years. We needed permission for stunning the animals outside the slaughter vehicle. Before that, there was no point in actually having the trailer built. In other words, the project stood or fell with this decision, which we tried to wrestle from the authorities. But this was exactly where the authority’s limit/edge was. We were slow to understand the depth of the authority’s NO. It was not a question of us using a mobile slaughter unit that was part of an EU-approved slaughterhouse. The authorities already knew that from the emergency killings. The point was that the first steps of slaughter should actually take place on farmland and not 100% in an EU-approved slaughterhouse that could be inspected by the authorities. From the authorities’ point of view, this created a new interface between

⁵⁹ Mindell, *Ancient One*, p. 196 f.

agriculture and the slaughterhouse that was not only spatially but also legally and therefore socially defined.⁶⁰ The farmer even took on the task of guiding the cattle into the restraining unit, a task that may normally only take place within the enclosed space of a slaughterhouse. Even more difficult for the authorities (the practitioner was astonished) was the moment when the stunned and collapsed animal was dragged about one meter over agricultural ground (which had to be neatly covered with an easy-to-clean plate) in order to get into the mobile slaughter unit and be killed there by bleeding (see picture). The powerful old image of the “dirty farmer/farm - the “dung heap” came back to the fore and the traditional mistrust that the farmer did not want to do it well, but only quickly and cheaply.

The authorities could not cross this line within our negotiations—although they were actually responsible for such a decision. De facto, however, the “decision-maker” was missing. Therefore, this step could only be resolved politically.

⁶⁰ The concept of the social interface does not appear in Process Work and was adopted by Armin Nassehi, a student of the systems theorist Niklas Luhmann (A. Nassehi, 2018). The term “interface” originally described the physical phase boundary between two states of a medium. Today, the term is used in communication and technology. It means a point of contact or starting point between subsystems through which communication takes place. In Nassehi’s explanations, it refers to the points of contact between social subsystems that have functionally differentiated themselves from society, such as science, law, politics, family, etc. They each follow their own logic and way of thinking and also organize social behavior and perceptions. Therefore, there is no central actor for social change. According to Nassehi, work is required at the interfaces of the otherwise barely interrelated subsystems. Nassehi, op. cit. p. 200 ff.

Initially, conflicts also broke out within the group of representatives of the various veterinary authorities. Only the two regional authorities involved were invited, as we wanted to carry out trial slaughterings in these two regions in cooperation with the local butcher. The third regional authority was left out. They invited themselves to the meetings. The competent regional authority in southern Hesse was completely opposed, the authority in the north with Dr. F. was more willing to compromise. However, everyone agreed that they could NOT decide. The ministry should decide. But the ministry did not decide, as the power to approve lies with the competent regional authorities. The ministry can hardly exercise its actual high rank because, similar to the three regional competent authorities, also the district veterinary offices run their areas like small kingdoms. Who finally decides whether the restraint and stunning of cattle is an exception that may be applied here?

The ghost role—the absence of the person who takes responsibility for a decision—was the most powerful role in the field. De facto, it was passed back and forth like a hot potato. As the federal state of Hesse had invested its own funds in our EU-funded project, a categorical NO was no longer possible. There was no turning back for the authorities (which is why they were initially skeptical in our first conversation). But how to come to a decision?

Playing across the Board

There was only one solution: bring in the politicians and play a game of brinkmanship. In his additional role as managing director of the lobby group for organic farmers in Hesse, my colleague Hans was well connected with politicians at state level. We spoke directly to the Ministry of Agriculture, which was run by the green party, and asked for the decision to be accelerated, as almost two of the three project years had already passed. Finally, the head of the department of meat hygiene of the Ministry of Agriculture, Dr. W., felt enabled enough to write a binding decision. The cattle may be restrained and stunned outside and the derogation applies to the entire herd! In January 2018, we were finally able to start building the trailer, and in November 2018, we were able to start trial slaughterings. The concerns of the representatives of the veterinarian authorities of all three levels melted like ice in the sun when they were able to experience the first low-stress slaughterings and turned into—almost—enthusiastic supporters of this new procedure. In the end, when the EU made the change to the legal situation in 2021, everyone was proud. “We in Hesse pushed this forward!”

Bridge Builders

Without our bridge builder in the project, Dr. I, an officer of the district veterinarian authority, who supported the method of slaughtering free-range cattle by gunshot, the project would not have been so successful. Unlike us, she not only knew all her colleagues in the various veterinary authorities,

she also knew the veterinary administration’s practices, the language, the procedures, the rules. She worked with us to develop the new forms required for the new procedure and went “undercover” for many a crucial phone call with colleagues and prepared the application for EU approval of the slaughter mobile.

Our bridge builder on the side of the regional competent authorities was Dr. F.. During the official meetings, he took on the role of the stubborn authority. After work, he came to my office to discuss with us how we could best go about it. A big thank you to both of them!

An old experience from regional development shows its truth: new things do not—as is often ideologically represented—only come from “below,” from the grassroots, from those “affected.” For the new to fall on fertile ground, “bottom and top” must work together. This requires at least one person from “above,” i.e. from politics and administration, who is open to the cause in order to help a movement, a new idea, come to life. Franz Rohrmoser, son of a mountain farmer and pioneer of independent regional development in Austria, once drew my attention to this. For change to take place, the bridge builders at all levels involved must work together at this interface.

Bringing into the World

The Killing

At the end of November 2018, we were able to carry out the first trial slaughter at Gut Breitenstein. I was always worried about the feelings that arise when a cow is killed.

The act of killing is not easy. Farmers and butchers make their living by killing animals and turning them into meat and thus into something that feeds us but also becomes a commodity that has its price.⁶¹

⁶¹ Around seventy percent of agricultural income comes from livestock farming (not including the EU single farm payment).



Figure 1: Process of semi-mobile cattle slaughter at Gut Breitenstein

And yet society is constantly grappling with the question: what justifies killing and eating animals?

People have probably always had moral objections to killing animals in order to eat them. Hence the sacrificial ritual and the multiple references to the fact that the slaughtering, butchering, and preparation of meat was often described as a sacred activity that could only be carried out by priests.⁶² Not so long ago, rural dwellers at least often had the experience of home slaughter and the associated slaughter feast with freshly-brewed kettle soup. Does it not bear traits of the communal meal associated with animal sacrifice? Almost every culture has a ritual at the end of which the smoke is served to the gods and the grilled meat is served to the people, writes Michael Pollan in his book *Cooking*.⁶³ According to Pollan, cooking is also a deeply cultural process because only humans have tamed the fire to prepare their food and only in this respect do they differ significantly from animals.⁶⁴

Perhaps that is what makes humans so special: He is the only animal that attaches importance to the fact that his food is not only *good to eat*, but also, as Claude Lévi-Strauss puts it, *good to think about*.

⁶² See Michael Pollan, *Kochen. Eine Naturgeschichte der Transformation*, Munich 2015, p. 66; references to this can already be found in the Bible (Moses) and Homer.

⁶³ Ibid, p. 52 ff.

⁶⁴ According to Lévi-Strauss, the difference between the *raw* and the *cooked* has become a metaphor for the difference between humans and animals in many cultures. According to Claude Lévi-Strauss, cooking not only defines the transition from nature to culture, but also human existence in all its diversity. By cooking, we change a natural state, elevate ourselves above nature and thus become more human.

Quoted from Pollan, *Cooking*, p. 67.

Knowing that the animal has had a good life and that we have killed and prepared the animal with respect and good craftsmanship gives us a different idea of the piece of meat on the table.⁶⁵

Last week there was a dead wild boar hanging out in our barn. The little boar had a smile around its snout and was sleeping. Peaceful they always say—the is peaceful. It had its eyes closed and its cheeks were pulled up a little, so there was a smile. It had been shot directly in the neck. It died instantly. He says. The hunter. My husband. But death is not peaceful. Not every shot hits.

As soon as the fur is removed and the head and legs are off, the animal is just meat: leg, back, forelegs, neck, and ribs. I'm looking forward to the roast wild boar. At Easter, the family gets together, and we bring along the two haunches of the sleeping wild boar and prepare and eat it together.

Everyone Has to Take a Step across the Border

The trial slaughterings on both farms and with both butchers involved were successful. The applications for approval were written and approved. From the outset, we planned to set out the procedures, compromises, and requirements of such a slaughtering process in the form of a guideline in the logic of the veterinary authorities. This should facilitate the dissemination of the procedure and its approval by the authorities. This guide was largely my work, i.e. that of my inner lawyer. Now that a new interface between

⁶⁵ Ibid, p. 65

agriculture and slaughterhouses has emerged, the responsibilities had to be precisely defined and the guide also had to be future-proof, i.e. not too closely tied to a specific technical solution. We coordinated the countless drafts of the guideline nationwide with activists of mobile slaughter and with veterinarians committed to it. The guideline was accepted by the Ministry—it was one of the key results of our project.

But then, shortly before the end of the project, an unexpectedly deep conflict arose in our project group. The sheep farmer E. was upset and felt abused as a subsidiary in his request to be allowed to kill animals on the farm at a cost that was economically justifiable for him and without a lot of bureaucracy. My apologies only upset him even more. He had written me multiple warning emails. I ignored them for fear of conflict. Now I had the conflict. According to E., the guideline only reflects the veterinarians' point of view. If a vet came to his farm with this guideline, it would make everything more difficult and more expensive. We had to sit down together. Hans and I started to listen to E.. He, for his part, had worked through the guideline meticulously. We spent a Sunday going through everything word for word. Which word could be misinterpreted. Where do we restrict the whole thing to a specific technique to be used? E. brought in the farmer's and butcher's point of view (he is also a trained butcher) and together we wrestled with the wording. At the end of the day, H. and I had to admit to ourselves that we had moved far too far to the veterinarians' side with the guideline and had almost exclusively used their point of view and language. We had lost sight of the farmers and butchers. B. brought them back in for us. The guideline became round and whole.

The negotiations with the authorities and the conflict with B: clearly showed that both sides have their limits in such processes. For a mutually acceptable solution, it is therefore necessary to “go over double edges.” It was not only the veterinary authority that had a boundary that was not easy to cross. The farmers in the group also had to cross their border and accept that the process would be more labor-intensive and more expensive than they had actually wanted. This necessity of crossing the border twice, i.e. from both sides, is usually overlooked and leads to ongoing conflict situations. The veterinarians went over the edge of the new “farm-slaughterhouse interface” and the butchers and farmers had to accept that the procedure under this current legal situation was more complicated than they had hoped. From a purely technical point of view, it would have been possible to bleed the stunned cattle while they were lying down without having to pull them into the trailer first. All these simplifications only came in 2020, almost two years after the end of the project—and that was the completely unexpected thing—with the change in EU law: bleeding in the open air, the trailer must be accepted by the authorities but not necessarily receive EU approval!

Now, at the end of the project, the economic issues came to the fore. In a state-funded project, economics does not yet speak. But then, released into the world, people ask: how expensive is the slaughter mobile? How much more does a slaughter cost? Will the butcher's workload increase or how can such slaughtering be well organized? And what about the bureaucratic effort—is it worth it for two cattle a year?

Do we need specialized service providers to make these slaughterings profitable?

The technology also had its say. Technical problems were rectified—but the restraining unit remained stubborn. It has to be able to act on many levels: Cattle must be able to go in and also out so that the restraining unit is trusted. It must be able to fix the head of the cattle so that the captive bolt stunner can be applied properly. It must be able to release the cattle immediately so that they can be pulled out easily, as the regulation stipulates that there must be no more than 60 seconds between stunning and bleeding. This is the stubbornness of the actors (Bruno Latour). Since the change in the legal situation, projects to improve the economy and technology have also begun.

The cattle also have their conditions: they are calm and even-tempered or nervous and quickly full of fear. They do not have horns from birth (Angus) or large horns that would get caught in the fixer stall. They are large and small, narrow and thick. Killing is not a stress-free standard job.

A Brief Preliminary Conclusion

Changing the world, resolving conflicts, bringing something new into the world are a good cause and a challenge given the complexity and diversity of the world. Publicly, too, it is now often said that we need to bring together different perspectives, set up round tables, and have broad-based commissions meet to dialogue. But the concrete “how” usually remains unanswered. Process Work has not only developed a theory but also instruments and attitudes that can deal with the “how.” The open forum format was created,

worldwork was carried out, and appropriate spaces for encounters, exchanges, and changes of perspective and role were created.

For the field of regional development projects, I have drawn the following conclusions from my work in this project:

- It is important to take a chance on projects that work experimentally at the social interfaces, want something new, and gain experience with the processes.
.....
- Process Work has created the necessary theoretical framework but has also developed instruments for acting from a new inner point and recognizing the active forces of the field.
.....
- Inner work and the attitude of *deep democracy* are central to giving all perspectives—within myself and in the outside world—a voice.
.....
- The information required for transformation and the power to do so lie hidden in the conflict. It already contains the potential for a solution—but everyone has to cross borders (double edges).
.....
- It is necessary to build relationships at all levels—especially relationships with decision-makers. Decision-makers at different levels must be brought together!

Having arrived at this point, I would like to draw attention to the nonhumans involved in these processes and conflicts, not least because they have become part of my inner team. Using the example of animals and the willfulness of our developed slaughtering technique, I could only dare to take a new look. What relationship can we establish with them? We humans should ask ourselves this question out of elementary self-interest. Can there be a new relationship between humans, nature, nonhumans,⁶⁶ and matter? What language will we speak and understand together?

I would like to thank everyone involved, my teachers and colleagues at the Deep Democracy Institute.

⁶⁶ Cf. Bruno Latour, *Making Things Public*. Speech at the finissage of the exhibition *Making Things Public* on October 2, 2005 at the KZM Karlsruhe, www.zkm.de

A Story from Ukraine, in Times of War

YULIYA FILIPPOVSKA⁶⁷, ANTON
YERMOLENKO⁶⁸, SERHIY RIABCHUK⁶⁹

Yuliya: It was a peak moment that I will never forget: a team of two learners from the two warring countries, Ukraine and Russia, facilitated an online small group discussion on the topic of the Russo-Ukrainian war within the Deep Democracy Institute leadership intensive in Nairobi in October 2023. International participants were holding space. Learners from two sides interacted openly, with one side having a direct accusation and another picking up the accusation. One facilitator said: for me, as a Ukrainian, it is hard to hear what you say, but as a facilitator, I welcome your voice; I need it, and I want to hear it. Such an awareness of different roles and interactions with the two sides present in a highly tense context gave me hope that we can be at war and still facilitate our interaction. We can work on the self, welcome all voices, and possibly come to some “cool” spots, even if for a moment, among colleagues and friends from countries that are at war with each other.

⁶⁷ Yuliya Filippovska, deep democracy coach and facilitator, a refugee to Geneva with a five-year-old son, originally from Kyiv, Ukraine

⁶⁸ Anton Yermolenko, a serial entrepreneur who lives in Kyiv, originally from Mariupol, Ukraine

⁶⁹ Serhiy Riabchuk, a founder of a web-hosting company and facilitator, who lives in Vinnitsya, Ukraine

But it would be impossible to do without training, innerwork, and a Deep Democracy Institute Ukraine (DDI Ukraine) team that had been working together on a project that started in March 2022, one month after the all-out invasion of Ukraine. Since then, every two weeks, two Ukrainian Process Work communities, DDI Ukraine and PWI Ukraine, partnered to meet and support each other to work on the issues connected to war. This project was envisioned, designed, initiated, and guided by Max and Ellen Schupbach, with the team of DDI diplomats Anton Yermolenko, Serhiy Riabchuk, and Yuliya Filippovska together with soon-to-be diplomats picking up the initiative.

Max and Ellen Schupbach initially came to Ukraine in 2008, when there was no other official Process Work training in Ukraine. They kept on coming and training us and organized a Skype bridge Open Forum between learners in Kyiv and Moscow in 2014, after the occupation of Crimea and the war that started in the East. An interview (see first reference below) with Max Schupbach and Xenia Kuleshova was recorded after the group process. Our teachers came in the summer of 2022 to Kyiv. Before it, we had two scheduled seminars with Ellen Schupbach in February 2022, and as the large-scale war started, these seminars were not canceled; they were held online, with people coming in and going, as some were in a supermarket buying products, others were on the road, moving to other more safe places. Ellen was present during all seminar days to any of us who would come and seek support in the state of shock, have space in the middle, and if

needed do innerwork with the teacher, and then go and act in the face of the war. I remember one such innerwork guided by Ellen, as I was in the car moving with my family to the West of Ukraine, and I know that this work saved, without exaggeration, one lifetime of mine. I managed to “die” with my old identity and be reborn again, which brought me a new perspective and allowed me to take specific steps when any step seemed to be wrong in times of war.

Inspired by such a seminar format of supporting Ukrainian learners in the wake of the full-scale war, Yaroslava Kot-Mironova, one of the founders of PWI Ukraine, our partner organization, mentioned in her presentation that it was the impulse for her “ReGeneration” project to emerge to support civilians during the war.

As I want to conclude my account and pass it on to my friends and colleagues, I would like to mention two learnings from this project that empowered me and, I believe, Ukraine in a time when oppression, genocide, and occupation occur. One learning is connected to our diversity as a team and as a nation. It is one thing to say, “I love diversity,” and it is totally another thing to live it, experience it, be torn apart by it, struggle with it, and learn and find a way to go along with it, see its beauty, and eventually love it. It took me more than a year, through the many conflicts and fights within the team, but most importantly, through the love of our teachers for each one of us in the team to see how diverse we are, appreciate each other, and learn not to fight over whose direction is right but to assist everyone who leads in each moment

and then rotate. By the way, Ukraine took the democratic route thanks to its plurality of voices. Plokhly (2022) writes, “The country’s regional and cultural diversity, inherited from its long history of rule by foreign empires and states, contributed to the political pluralism of Ukrainian society,” (p. 47) which makes me appreciate our diversity even more. Diversity seems to be an essential aspect that allows my country to be and to thrive, for centuries amid difficulties.

Another learning is connected to the realization that there is no other way than to be direct with each other if we want to end wars. In our Ukrainian community meetings, I learned that it is important for one to express him/herself/ themselves freely, even if the view is different and/or difficult and painful to the other. Then, there is another person in a group who can pick it up, sometimes with the help of a facilitator role, and together, we as a community can hold it, facilitate it, and work it out. Having someone who sees and appreciates it happening is crucial, too. My greatest dream is a world where the public is used not only to demonstrate how we can battle, hate, and kill each other but how we can be direct, hold space, and facilitate conversation to work together and transform these battles into possible new understanding and resolutions. I work on it with my research, and the DDI Ukraine community project empowers me as a Ukrainian refugee to walk my dream.

Anton: Thank you, Yulia, for setting the scene, sharing your story, and creating the atmosphere. I have been so fortunate to be with you and Serge on

the facilitation team of the Ukrainian community meetings for nearly two years now!

Before delving into and sharing some learnings (I sense there is someone on the other side who is impatient and wants some distilled insights right away.), I cannot help but pause and reflect on where I stand and what surrounds me. I am a middle-aged white man, relatively well-to-do (measured by Ukrainian standards). I am writing this account in my Kyiv house, and I now realize the privilege of being in my own house, or any house, a privilege many Ukrainians cannot enjoy due to the war. I see myself as part of a nation that has suffered through centuries due to constant oppression, the Holodomor (artificially created mass famine in Ukraine in 1932-1933), and now the war with Russia.

The Ukrainian community meetings are a true gift to me, and I believe they are helpful to some of the participants. They helped reveal the disturbances or issues I have as an individual but in a group. These issues manifested themselves as shared concerns and became more accessible to processing.

In the initial period of the war, the prevailing feeling was one of immense change. Something that was once known and stable had vanished, and nobody knew when this stability would come back, if at all. Some of my friends and relatives left Ukraine; some had their home cities occupied by Russians, and sadly, some were killed. The familiar, cozy little world was shattering, and the scope of thinking and planning shifted to just one day, just today.

It was challenging to orient myself in these new circumstances but being solely on the receiving end of uncertainty and fear was too hard and miserable. During the Ukrainian community meetings, I noticed that this was a shared feeling among many, and this realization itself was a relief. It allowed me to gain some distance from the issue—to address it. Working on it with a group, I discovered an image of free fall. I was (together with the whole of Ukraine) free-falling! This was a mind-blowing discovery, the “a-ha” moment that helped me, strangely, to orient myself and even find some “ground.”

So, the new “ground” was no ground, as in a free fall. The only thing I could be sure about was that the next day I would no longer be where I was the previous day—that is what “falling” is all about. No stability, certainty, or planning—all this started falling into place and becoming a “new normal.”

During these months of our journey with our Ukrainian community meeting, we have struggled with, cried over, had a lot of fun with, and eventually processed many community issues, and at times managed to come to unforgettable moments of temporary resolutions!! I am so amazed at how our group helped me see the fractal nature of what I initially considered my “personal” issue and see it as a community issue or even as timeless spirits manifesting themselves through us.

Serhiy: Even though it may be natural, it surprised me how social processes came to the fore at the beginning of the war. In comparison, anything related to personal relationships took a back seat. For nearly twenty months, nearly all topics of our

meetings were in one way or another connected to relationships among three roles: soldiers who are fighting, citizens who stay in a relatively “peaceful” part of Ukraine, and refugees who left the country. However, the topics of the last two meetings were about relationships with children and within a family. In the beginning, priority was given to collective issues over personal issues. Each Ukrainian family has been affected by the war. Millions of women have been forced to leave the country and raise their children practically by themselves while their husbands have not been able to. Many families have been torn apart and forced to build relationships over long distances. That caused a lot of problems. But these issues have been given less priority in the public sphere and during our meetings for a long time. It brought me to a realization of how collective and personal are connected and how having a community to work on issues, including personal experiences, during the war is critical, or else it is nearly impossible to face it alone.

Perhaps one of the most important factors in the relationship between people who are at war, people who live “peaceful” lives in Ukraine, and Ukrainian refugees abroad was guilt and fear. In general, fear is not easy to recognize but even harder to acknowledge in times of war, when strength, bravery, and sacrifice become especially valuable to society. Those who chose to live a “peaceful” life in Ukraine or to become refugees abroad found it challenging to recognize their fear of war. At the same time, seeing all the suffering and horrors that war brought, they felt guilty, which did not allow them to support their country enough during the war. It led to finding

out that any activity outside of the war front, no matter how valuable to society, was of lesser value. Yet, feeling that however much one does is “not enough” is very painful. Surprising was to hear that soldiers on the battlefield felt fear and guilt as well, not doing “enough” to save the lives of their sisters and brothers. It brought more awareness that fear and guilt were not personal but shared experiences that belonged to the war situation. As a result, most of the processes that took place in our community meetings became a ground for people—both inside Ukraine, in more “peaceful” regions, and outside—to feel the value, importance, and meaning of one’s actions, however small, along with those who were fighting at the front, acknowledging all the differences.

The other aspect that surprised me was the hidden tension between Ukrainian civil society and those who were fighting. Some people who live relatively “peaceful” lives see the soldiers fighting as potentially dangerous. There is an unspoken opinion: letting someone who has just returned from war into life potentially opens the door to the war in one’s life. However impossible it is to admit it to oneself, let alone speak about it in public, I sense it is still happening. Sometimes a wish to help turns into greater distancing from people with military experience, and thus harm and division among people.

For example, there are many conversations about PTSD right now. On the one hand, there is nothing wrong with it; during the war, people understand what PTSD is, and we learn how to relate to a person with PTSD. Moreover, I understand those

psychologists who popularize knowledge about PTSD. However, speaking about society overall, such a move becomes a justification for distancing between civil society and soldiers, while we need more integration. For example, as a result of available knowledge, it has become self-explicit that everyone who has been in the military has PTSD and needs special treatment before they are discharged and can return to civilian life. It is done seemingly to protect society from the effects of their military experience. I believe that it may be an important piece of knowledge to learn about PTSD. However, it may also backfire; and instead of labeling people, we need practices and public spaces for different groups of people to talk to each other, understand each other, and find ways to integrate every experience, be it on the battlefield, in relatively “peaceful” regions, or abroad, learning from each other. We hope that our community meetings can be one of such platforms that allow us to do so.

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Ending

More insights and learnings from our joint DDI Ukraine and PWI Ukraine community meetings can be found on Facebook with the hashtag: #fieldnotesfromUkraine in English and #польові нотатки з України in Ukrainian.

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Kin of Bone and Stone: Braiding Process Work and Posthumanism

LIZ SCARFE⁷⁰

Introduction

I don't really *get it*: Process Work. In most moments of most days, I just don't get it. It's been twenty-one years since I first encountered Process Work, nine years since I completed the Diploma. Still, I only occasionally, really feel I get it in my bones, mostly in numinous moments that reach beyond description. I understand Process Work as an exercise in trying to understand how the world works; what is arguably a central quest of all human cultures, being curious as we are. Ecologist Frank Egler comforts me in this pursuit that "nature is not more complex than we think, it is more complex than we can think" (Egler, 1977, p. 2) and so I grapple inadequately and underequipped. My most recent grappling has been with posthumanist ontologies, another approach to trying to understand how the world works.

As an ontological theory, Process Work has always been a *braiding together*; an idea evolving at intersections. And not just the intersections of disciplines, but of epistemologies. As a foundational, mythic pattern that can inform the ongoing development of the paradigm, Process Work is forever poised to benefit from new braids that engage diverse modes of thinking and

⁷⁰ Liz Scarfe is a Process Work Diplomate from Wurundjeri country in Naarm (Melbourne) Australia, of settler colonial ancestry.

being. Process Work is well suited to intersecting with posthumanism due to a shared rejection of mechano-reductive "dead matter" theories of nature (Plumwood, 2009) whereby humans are crowned the only "mindful, thinking agents on Earth" (Bird Rose, 2017, p. 494). In Process Work, the concept of a universe-level organizing principle, variously named in different knowledge systems the Process Mind⁷¹, the Tao that cannot be spoken, Buddha Mind, etc, is afforded a kind of thinking agency that infuses all manifest life.

But is Process Work already posthuman? Can posthumanism add anything to Process Work? This article is an early thinking-through of these questions. I begin by defining posthumanism, then share a thought experiment and a personal vignette of how it might extend conceptualizations and applications of Process Work.

Posthumanism

Posthumanism is an epistemology belonging to what Grusin (2015) calls the *nonhuman turn*, referring to the emergence of

critical, theoretical, and philosophical approaches to the humanities and social sciences...engaged in decentering the human in favor of a turn toward and concern for the nonhuman, understood variously in terms of animals, affectivity, bodies, organic and geophysical systems, materiality, or technologies. (Grusin, 2015, p. vii)

⁷¹ I won't provide definitions of Process Work terms in this article. If needed, please refer to this excellent glossary: <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/54a386c7e4b07985e3618194/t/5ea8f1006ade3c4d2c109737/1588130049899/process-work-glossary-april2020.pdf>

In *We Have Never Been Modern*, perhaps the most influential work of early posthumanist theory, Latour (1993) provides an extensive critique of modern anthropocentric dualism, in particular the nature-culture and subject-object split. Arguing that phenomenological reality is not and cannot be split in such a way, Latour contends that objects are not simply for humans to project onto but are co-creators and co-producers of reality with their own positionality. Latour defends this position through a lengthy exposition of how reality is not split between but exists in indivisible entanglements of what he names as nature (science), politics (culture), and discourse (representation) and demonstrates how attempting to understand the world without such splitting broadens our capacity for more complex and real understandings of the world.

Whilst Grusin's definition implies a concerning epistemic abandoning of humans frequently critiqued in the literature, the opposite is in fact the case. In his 2009 work, *What is Posthumanism?*, Wolfe answers the titular question by proposing that posthumanism requires the nature of thinking itself to change by the removal of humans from "any particular privileged position in relation to matters of meaning, information and cognition" (Wolfe, 2009, p. xii). In other words, posthumanism decentralizes humans from systems of knowledge and ways of understanding the world. Wolfe's posthumanism "opposes the fantasies of disembodiment and autonomy, inherited from humanism" (Wolfe, 2009, p. xv). Posthumanism doesn't turn away from humans, it simply seeks to remind us that humans live

in complex contexts, populated by many others who are not human, and that our lives are interconnected processes of being and becoming. That, to know ourselves better, we must stop decontextualising ourselves from the rest of the world and stop pretending we are the only agential beings. The aim of posthumanism is therefore to "reposition the (post)human as part of a vital meshwork constituted by other being, bodies, and materialities" (Howard & Küpers, 2022, p. 3).

Through his focus on animals, Wolfe's work also highlights a critical diversity within posthuman epistemologies: the question of how far agency or psychic subjectivity is recognised in non-human others. Some approaches only extend agency to animals, whilst others extend it to plants (Kohn, 2013) and fungi (Tsing, 2015), and then others even further to what are considered inanimate objects such as mountains, rivers, rubbish dumps, and bits of string (Barad, 2007; Bird Rose, 2017; Ingold, 2013). Personally, I am interested in the latter end of the spectrum, what might be called animism.

Australian anthropologist Deborah Bird Rose describes animism as "an ontology in which non-humans are not only lively, but can be understood as persons, that is, as being with an interest in their own life, their own way of life (conatus), and their own desires" (Bird Rose, 2017, p. 495). Animism, in its various forms, has been the dominant cosmology of all of human cultures, with the exception of the past three to four centuries in Western culture (Vetlesen, 2019). It is the "fundamental psychological disposition of our

species” and it is “only under the effects of a long training that we are able, in modern societies, to repress, blunt, and finally forget it” (Stepanoff, 2019, p. 49, cited in and translated by Conty, 2022, p. 22).

There is no one defining moment in the rejection of animist consciousness in Western culture. If there could be a beginning, perhaps it is in the early Christian mythic tale of the Garden of Eden where humans are traumatically ejected from nature. The anthropocentric Enlightenment period was also significant and culturally influential theorists such as Freud (1997) further evolved these theories of animism as primitive.⁷² Across these most recent centuries, the West has marginalized, vilified, and violently oppressed forms animist thought (Bird Rose, 2017) and it remains a highly stigmatized ontological position today.

I suggest that posthumanism is a mechanism for Western culture to once again center animist consciousness, prompted by extreme environmental crises. If hyper-rationalism has been our primary cultural identity for the last 300-400 years, these life-threatening environmental crises might be the painful symptom-ally that forces us to cross this highly concretised edge at the threat of global annihilation.

⁷² Animism, still alive and well in many indigenous cultures, was positioned by Western colonial powers as *proof* of primitive nature, one of the many arguments used to justify colonialism which still operates today. Engaging forms of animist consciousness therefore has the potential shift patterns of cultural domination.

Who Can Have a Process?

The posthumanist concept of *agential realism* from theoretical physicist and feminist theorist Karen Barad extends Neils Bohrs explanations of the double slit experiment and reads a lot like Mindell (2000, 2010). Bohr’s radical idea (very oversimplified here) is that the observer impacts the phenomena being observed and therefore *what* is observed. Barad takes this further to suggest that phenomena don’t precede observation and are then simply impacted by it, but rather, phenomena are “intra-actions of an object and the measuring agencies, which both emerge from, rather than precede, the intra-actions that produce them” (Barad, 2007, p. 128), that is to say, phenomena are *because* of the intra-action of observed and observer.

If primary and secondary processes are mediated by ongoing acts of marginalization, that is, observation, or as Barad calls it, “agential cuts” (Barad, 2007, p. 140), whereby observing one thing means we don’t observe another, does this mean that all agents who observe have primary and secondary processes? Other animals observe; plants observe, fungi observe, maybe rocks and rivers and clouds observe. We observe things to gain knowledge about them, but this requires us to momentarily cut a *thing* from entangled reality. Where we make these cuts and therefore what gets made visible and invisible, is of course a culturally mediated practice for all species (if we allow that all species have culture).

Consider a domesticated dog.⁷³ Both the dog and I have been socialized. We've both been taught ways of behaving to fit in with cultural norms and expectations—we both know what it means to be a *good dog*. And despite all this, despite ourselves and our love of treats and pats, we're not always *good*. In my case, that of a human, I understand this is because I have a process that is more than being good, not all of my identity fits in with cultural norms and expectations. But when I've encountered a *naughty* dog, I usually think it's just expressing its untamed *dog nature* and by this, I homogenize the individual dog as *all dogs*, and assume its expression is basically meaningless (and sometimes judge the dog owner, again, denying the dog agency and individuality). What if I allowed that the dog also has a secondary process, has parts of identity that don't fit *good dog*, not simply as an expression of a generic primal dog nature, but of the mythic process of *that* dog. I get afforded an individual process, why not the dog?

Let's say I have an interaction with a dog that I perceive as representing something secondary. In my way of understanding Process Work, I could do inner work to better comprehend the nature of my secondary process as revealed by that interaction. Depending on the signals and channels of the interaction I might unfold a movement with my body, an auditory signal, they might unfold into a dreamfigure, I might even shapeshift into the dog. Process Work theory might have led you, but it hadn't led me to consider the dog's process.

⁷³ I use a dog here as many people now allow that dogs have consciousness and agency. Using a plant or fungi or rock would currently be conceptually more difficult.

If I try to think about this with a posthuman lens, one that doesn't center me the human as the only one with a process, I must consider that the dog also is directed by the entangled field through its own subjective reality, with its own mythic fated processes. Whilst it has a different embodied form, different practices of knowledge making, different affective modes, different forms of communication, surely none of this excludes it from *having a process* such as I afford myself. How does this change my inner work when I afford the dog its own process. My first thought is maybe it's like doing relationship work but two problems (at least) arise here. First, how to work across species, second, it's still a very anthropocentric position. If I try to *Barad* this idea, that is, to understand the signal that I call secondary in this scenario is an intra-action of agents—me, the dog, and both our capacities for observation—I don't know which of us *has a process* because the signal doesn't *belong* to either of us, it is *of* us and our intra-acting observations.

This is where I don't get it. My reading of Process Work theory is that no one person really *has* a process; we are entangled together in the universe which *is* a process. But in practice we seem to talk about it like *I* have a process, *you* have a process, etc. Sometimes I think I'm getting lost between theory and application, but I agree with sociologist Charles Wright Mills that there can be no difference between theory and method, they are both “part of the practice of a craft” (Mills, 1959, p. 216). So, I suspect in my practice of the craft that is Process Work, I've been getting lost somewhere between the entangled universe and the individual human and it is here that posthumanism is helping me find my way.

Rose Chintz

My maternal grandparents were very English, made evident in all aspects of their household décor. Skipping a full account of their Anglophilic homewares, I focus on their everyday dinnerware—Rose Chintz by Johnson Brothers (Fig 1.)—heavily decorated with blue roses on a ceramic base and a fond memory from my childhood. When they passed away, the plates became my mother’s everyday dinnerware, and when she passed away, they became mine.

A particularly mythic dream about twelve years ago featured one of these plates, and at the time, I understood it as representing lineage, family history, something ancestral, positing the plate as a sentimental and nostalgic device. As I contemplate these plates now through a posthuman lens, allowing them a liveliness I hadn’t been able to fully allow them twelve years ago, my associations and indeed my experience of the plate in the dream are quite different (what the primary identity thinks surely changes the depth to which we can unfold/access secondary processes). Using a posthuman lens, I move past an affective and representational understanding of the plate and see a mineral body (as am I), adorned, and in service to my family for three generations. A highly breakable coalescence of minerals mediated by fire and water, that for over 60 years, has survived small hands, soapy hands, shaky hands, tired hands, frustrated hands (and innumerable house moves).

Plates that have participated in the conveyance of over 65,000 meals. Now, I feel awed by such an achievement. In my life, I may perhaps never serve this world so well. My mother didn’t get to live as long as these plates.



It is, of course, well understood that the way we relate to dream symbols changes over our lifetime, and it is obviously my process to cross personal and cultural edges to recenter animist consciousness. My argument is perhaps more that a posthuman lens, with its detailed focus on all actors in a field (not just humans and not the field as a conglomerate force), might give us better or different access to individual secondary processes due to the affordance of all being and matter *having* a process and because it is aligned with a larger cultural secondary process.

Conclusion

These are early, uncoordinated attempts to braid together Process Work and posthumanism. It’s a bit lumpy, and the shape of the finished object is not yet apparent. In this moment though, my exploration suggests to me that Process Work thus far reflects much of the anthropocentrism of humanism, whilst at the same time, features

highly progressive applications of the non-dualism articulated in posthumanism. I suggest it is the focus on the transpersonal level of interconnectivity as opposed to the relational interconnectivity between species that has resulted in this somewhat paradoxical non-dualistic yet anthropocentric position.

In this way, Process Work has perhaps thus far perpetuated a form of Eurocentric transcendentalism that I propose here, could be remedied with posthumanist thinking by bringing more detailed attention to the relational processes of being and becoming in our assemblages of diverse forms of liveliness.

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