

WHAT DO I DO WITH MY PRIVILEGES (?)

Processing internalized supremacism
from a privileged social intersection

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Processwork Diploma

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1 | Introduction

We were born of the night. We live in the night. We will die in it. But the light will be tomorrow for others, for all those who today weep at night, for those who have been denied the day, for those for whom death is a gift, for those whose life is denied. The light will be for all of them. For everyone everything. For us pain and anguish, for us the joy of rebellion, for us a future denied, for us the dignity of insurrection. For us nothing.[...]

In the world of the powerful there is no space for anyone but themselves and their servants. In the world we want everyone fits. The world we want is one where many worlds fit.

EZLN. Fourth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle. Mexico, January 1996¹

Since my adolescence, I have dreamed of a better world. My brain and my heart are activists. I want to fight for a more just world, free of oppression and abuse of power. For a long time now, the concept of a “world [...] where many worlds fit” (or even all of the worlds) has been a clear reference for me, a stable horizon toward which to walk. But the path to that dream is uncertain.

For a long time, I thought I had a clear path. To achieve a world without oppression, we must fight against the oppressors. And the oppressors are the systems of oppression: capitalism, governments, fascism, armies, police. And their executors: the capitalists, the rulers, the fascists, the soldiers, the policemen. Systems and people that I can point out and reject, that are not me, and that I can fight against to defend justice and the common good.

But I always felt something uncomfortable about my social identity. Something didn't add up: as a son of the wealthy middle class, I lived ensconced in the privileges of capitalism. As if that were not enough, I soon came into contact with feminism and the awareness of the benefits of being a man in a patriarchal system. Not to mention being white, European, cis, heterosexual, neurotypical and with a normative body... The struggles against structural oppressions placed me much more on the side of the oppressor than on that of the oppressed. I was on the side of the powerful who do not share the light!

At a certain point, I also discovered Processwork, which says something like that in what disturbs us, in what we least identify with, there is some truth about us, some message that we may need to integrate, an energy that we marginalize in ourselves and that we need to embrace. If we don't do it, it might manifest itself unconsciously. From this viewpoint, the capitalist, the fascist, the sexist, the racist, the oppressor and the supremacist, are all to some extent parts of me I am not allowing myself to take consciously. And by pointing them out as something external, I just will have a harder time being aware of when I act in those ways in my relationships and in the world. And

¹ *Clandestine Indigenous Revolutionary Committee-General Command of the Zapatista Army of National Liberation.*
https://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/1996/1996_01_01_a.htm

activism on social justice is also very clear: all these systems of oppression benefit me and educate me to use and abuse my *social privileges*² in the world. Whether I like it or not, oppression, privilege and supremacy operate through me in every level -internal, relational and systemic.

So how can I fight for a better world, being born on the side of “the oppressor?” Do I have to fight against myself?

1a. Why do I do this Final Project?

I do this Final Project trying to answer to this invitation:

White supremacy is a system you have been born into. Whether or not you have known it, it is a system that has granted you unearned privileges, protection, and power. It is also a system that has been designed to keep you asleep and unaware of what having that privilege, protection, and power has meant for people who do not look like you. What you receive for your whiteness comes at a steep cost for those who are not white. This may sicken you and cause you to feel guilt, anger, and frustration. But you cannot change your white skin color to stop receiving these privileges, just like BIPOC cannot change their skin color to stop receiving racism. But what you can do is wake up to what is really going on. I invite you to challenge your complicity in this system and work to dismantle it within yourself and the world.

Layla F. Saad, *Me and White Supremacy* (2020), p.25

I am doing this final project trying to answer the question of “what can I do with my social privileges to fight for a better world?”, widening thus Layla F. Saad's invitation to any other axis of oppression and supremacy that grants me social privileges: sexism, cis-heteronormativity, classism, ableism, etc. I think part of what people like me can do, with such a privileged *positionality*³, is to stop giving our opinion about how “we think the rest of the world should be and live” and start “worrying about our own business”: how our social privileges shape in us a supremacist way of being in the world, the huge historical and current impact this has on the rest of humanity and the planet, and what are we going to do about it.

I want a world in which all worlds fit. I know that these systems of oppression and discrimination exclude the majority of human beings because of their social identity. So the world I want needs those systems of oppression to change. And I know that in most of those systems I have fallen on

² Social privilege refers to an “advantage or entitlement that benefits individuals belonging to certain groups, often to the detriment of others.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_privilege

³ “Positionality refers to a person's location in relation to their various social identities (gender, race, class, ethnicity, ability, geographic location, etc.); The combination of these identities and their intersections shape the way we understand and relate to the world, including our knowledge, perspectives, and teaching practices.” (Alcoff, 1988).

the privileged side. But despite all that power and all that social awareness, I feel clumsy and unable to reduce the impact that my privileges have on my relationships, on my groups, on the society in which I live, on the people around me.

Every time I try to do something from the awareness of my privileges, I get stuck. When the “enemy” was away, it was easy to act. But when I know that what I want to change is part of me, everything becomes more confusing. Should I use my power and privilege to support other social struggles or should I use my power and privilege less and leave more space? Should I focus on myself and work on my supremacisms or should I stop thinking about myself and support others? Should I point out and attack those who abuse their power or should I reach out to them and work together to change? While I grapple with these questions, I continue to unconsciously act in supremacist ways and use and abuse my social privileges.

Even on top of that, when I receive criticism or am accused of abusing my power, I do everything except make it easy for the other person. A series of chain reactions occur to defend myself from the threat of being identified as “sexist,” “racist” or “homophobic,” or to make it clear that it was not my intention, denying validity to the impact that the other person suffered. And when I become aware of my supremacist actions and reactions, I find myself immersed myself in guilt, shame, destructive self-criticism or depression -in an infinite loop that continues to put all the focus on me.

I am doing this project because I want to get out of that loop, and I believe that combining the views and tools of Processwork with those of *intersectional activism*⁴ can be of help on that path. I think using these frameworks together can help me find new patterns and tools to do something more productive with my social privileges (for myself and the world). And I think if it is useful for me to better deal with my privileges, it can be useful for others like me. And perhaps this will help in some way to get us a little closer to that world in which all worlds fit.

1b. Who can be interested in this work?

This project is centered on me and my experience dealing with my social privileges. So the main person interested in this work is me: I am mainly trying to answer a question I have, by analyzing problems that I experience and proposing tools to work on them. But my sincere belief and hope is that other people with similar privileges will find similarities with their experience, ask themselves similar questions, and find some of the hypotheses and tools that I propose in this work useful. That is to say: I believe that this work can be useful for the people closest to my social identity, that is, those who have the most social privileges.

⁴ In section 1c I will explain more what Intersectionality is and what I mean by “intersectional activism” – and also the dangers of this later term.

But I also think it may be of interest to anyone interested in topics such as activism, social justice, intersectionality, facilitation and Processwork. Intersectionality, decolonial and anti-racist feminism, and privilege awareness are topics very present in my local and in the international Processwork community. I think this work may be of interest to *processworkers* and students who are experiencing internal debates similar to those I discuss in section 3: how can we combine facilitation and social activism? How are Processwork and Intersectionality related? How do my social privileges influence my work as a *processworker*? Furthermore, in section 2, when explaining the theoretical bases of Processwork, I present some hypotheses based on a more activist and intersectional analysis, which can open lines of debate and research to continue delving deeper into this relationship. On the other hand, working with reactions to feedback and altered states in section 4 can be useful to work on the inner world that awakens in any relationship when faced with any accusation or criticism (and not only related to social privileges).

I also know that other people with social privileges, but outside the Processwork methodology, are also asking themselves similar questions, and I hope that reading my experience and my proposals can be useful or inspiring. I think the patterns, reactions, and altered states I describe in section 4 are very common in people who are trying to do something with their social privileges. I write the project wanting it to be accessible to people who do not know the theoretical and practical body of Processwork, and therefore I try to explain all the concepts, especially in section 2.

If you have social privileges, but in one of the axes you have suffered structural oppression throughout your life (for being a woman, or BIPOC, or LGTBiq+, or lower class...), perhaps the patterns of supremacy and privileges that you have in other axes operate in different ways than those I propose in section 4. I believe that living the experience of marginalization in other axes can help to open up more to feedback and awareness of the impact on other axes, and reduce the reactions and altered states that you experience when facing the social impact of your privileges. Still, perhaps some reflections and tools that I propose may be useful to you in your work with your privileges, or inspire you to do similar work with your specific experience of oppression.

Finally, if you are towards the more oppressed end of privilege, I may not tell you anything new because you have already experienced many of these patterns and reactions from people like me too many times. If you still read this project, I hope you find something of interest for you. Please, feel more than welcome to give me any feedback you have about this work.

A note regarding the use of the word “we”: in this work, I sometimes use “we” to refer to people with privileges, sometimes to refer to *processworkers*, and sometimes to any potential reader. I have tried to clarify at every moment who I was referring to, and I apologize if at some point I did not clarify it enough and I am including you in a “we” of which you do not feel part. I also sometimes use the masculine when I’m referring to privileged identities or supremacist roles, and the feminine

when I'm trying to refer to oppressed or activist identities. This is a conscious decision that aims to make visible the trend of privileges in the gender axis⁵.

Sometimes I also try to simplify the description of my multiple privileges, or the identity of other similar people, or the different systems of oppression, under terms like “heteronormative white man” or “heteropatriarchal colonial system,” which do not encompass the full reality of the systems of oppression and the multitude of axes that generate inequality in our society. I apologize for making some axes invisible with the intention of simplifying, and I encourage readers to ask themselves again and again what axes they are not taking into account.

1c. Methodology and frameworks

This is a work of individual focus. I am the social sample on which I base my hypotheses and reflections. In principle, their validity is not beyond me. But one of my main hypotheses is that the intersection of a majority of social privileges (being a cis man, white, heterosexual, from a middle class background, etc.) and the absence of experiences of structural oppression generate a series of supremacist patterns such as which I describe in section 4. My observation and belief (not empirically proven in this work) is that others with a social identity similar to mine experience similar behaviors, reactions and altered states. This is where the application of this work can go beyond me. Therefore, the methodology of this work is heuristic. The design is to apply a process-oriented approach with activist and intersectional influences, to analyze my behavioral dynamics in relation to my privileges and supremacisms derived from my positionality.

Processwork

Processwork is an awareness methodology developed by Arnold Mindell⁶, for facilitating individuals, relationships, groups and organizations. According to the theoretical framework of this approach, in addition to the reality we usually pay attention to, dream-like experiences are happening all the time inside and outside of us - in our body symptoms, in our imagination and night dreams, in our unconscious movement, in our different states of mind and consciousness, in conflicts, and in our relationships, communities and in the world. Instead of just rejecting or considering these signals as alien, in the Processwork paradigm they are considered significant. By focusing our attention on these signals, observing and learning to follow them, we can connect

⁵I chose to make more visible the gender axis as it is the one in which I learned more about my privileges and the impact of my unconscious supremacism that I show in this project. But this decision works only on the mainstream binary gender frame, so it doesn't include gender fluidity and no binary identities who are not represented by the he/she options. I apologize for contributing to your invisibilization with this decision.

⁶https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arnold_Mindell

with the flow of experience that “wants to happen,” even if it goes against our identity, social belief systems or preconceived ideas.

To facilitate this “flow of experience,” Processwork also takes into account the dynamics of power, rank, and privilege. The philosophy of Deep Democracy considers that all voices and perceptions of reality are necessary for a group (but also for a relationship or for the internal world of a person) for it to be sustainable. In all of us there are experiences to which we give more validity, voice and power, and others to which we give less. These dynamics of oppression and marginalization are reproduced from global structures to the innermost part of each of us and vice versa. In section 2 I further explain these and other theoretical concepts of Processwork.

Fights against systems of oppression

The world in which we live gives more centrality, power and validity to some social identities than to others. Due to social distinctions such as being male or white, you will have greater ease in life, while simply because you are lesbian, migrant or have a non-normative body you will face multiple marginalizations and difficulties. These dynamics constitute the social, legal, cultural, juridical and political structures that organize our societies. But they have also been established for a long time, so they are internalized in the form of cultural, symbolic and belief systems that influence collective dynamics, relational behaviors and internalized supremacisms and oppressions. As we will see in this work, even if we are against supremacist mandates, they operate through us in our daily lives, with an enormous impact on people with fewer social privileges.

To fight against these abusive power dynamics, oppressed groups have historically fought against oppressive groups. Working class, feminist, anti-colonial, anti-racist or LGTBiq+ struggles have been gradually changing the appearance of our world, and they continue and will continue to do so day by day, as long as inequality and abuse exist. In parallel, they have been developing new theoretical approaches, political frameworks and philosophical bodies to confront the “established knowledge” of the white man. Currents and social movements like *black feminism*⁷, *queer studies*⁸ *decolonial criticism*⁹, *anti-ableism*¹⁰ or *mad pride*¹¹ collapse the pre-established schemes that seek to

⁷ “Black feminism is a branch of feminism that focuses on the African-American woman’s experiences and recognizes the intersectionality of racism and sexism.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_feminism

⁸ “Queer studies, sexual diversity studies, or LGBT studies is the study of topics relating to sexual orientation and gender identity usually focusing on lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, gender dysphoric, asexual, queer, questioning, and intersex people and cultures” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Queer_studies

⁹ “Decoloniality is a school of thought that aims to delink from Eurocentric knowledge hierarchies and ways of being in the world in order to enable other forms of existence on Earth” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decoloniality>

¹⁰ Activism against ableism, which “is discrimination and social prejudice against people with physical or mental disabilities.” <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ableism>

¹¹ “Mad Pride is a mass movement of current and former users of mental health services, as well as those who have never used mental health services but are aligned with the Mad Pride framework. The movement advocates that individuals with mental illness should be proud of their ‘mad’ identity.” https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mad_pride

leave out certain worldviews, bodies, experiences and identities. All of these struggles and ways of understanding life try to work every day for “a world in which all worlds fit” -or at least for those who do not fit in this world.

This final project tries to find ways to support these struggles, or at least not to be part of the opposing barricade. My activist heart wants to get rid of the supremacist in me, and my process-oriented mind knows that not looking at it will only cause the supremacist to act through me without me realizing. Becoming aware of how all these social privileges in the different axes of inequality interact and shape my supremacist beliefs and behaviors is key to fighting them.

Intersectionality

“Intersectionality is a way of understanding and analyzing the complexity of the world, people and human experiences. [...] When it comes to social inequality, people's lives and the organization of power in a given society are best understood as something determined, not by a single axis of social division, be it race, gender or class, but by many axes that act together and influence each other.”

Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, *Intersectionality* (2016)

My knowledge of intersectional analysis is very limited and recent. Intersectionality is not a defined current of thought, nor a specific school, and it continues to constantly evolve. As I read more about the concept¹² I find it more and more interesting and less and less clear. When I first started using the term, I was mistakenly using it to refer to the various axes of oppression separately (gender, sexual orientation, origin and racialization, social class, age, functional diversity...), to then understand that part of the richness of intersectionality is precisely asking how these axes interact with each other.

*Intersectionality*¹³ was a term first coined by American lawyer Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw¹⁴ in 1989, observing that the axes of race, gender or class separately could not explain the oppression suffered by a black, lower-class woman, or provide a sufficient judicial or legal response to that specific “intersection” of oppressions. Before that, the Combahee River Collective¹⁵, a black and lesbian feminist organization, published a statement¹⁶ which talked about how different systems of oppression (in this case racism, sexism and heteronormativity) are intertwined. This text arose in response to the alienation they felt in relation to white feminism and the anti-racist struggle dominated by heterosexual men. Intersectionality suggests that inequality cannot be understood by

¹² To better understand the complexity of the term and different approaches and visions of its application, these two books helped me a lot: *Intersectionality* (2016) by Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge, and *Intersectionality. Inequalities, places and emotions* (2021) by María Rodó-Zárate.

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intersectionality#cite_note-Academia.edu-1

¹⁴ https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kimberl%C3%A9_Crenshaw

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Combahee_River_Collective

¹⁶ <http://circuitous.org/scraps/combahee.html>

taking into account a single axis of oppression, but rather by observing the interaction between the various axes. Intersectional analysis and practice invite us to “ask ourselves the other question” when we work with an axis of inequality: how is gender oppression expressed in a migrant woman? How does lesbophobia operate in an elderly woman in the rural world? How does poverty oppress a person stigmatized for their mental health? How does ableism interact with racism in a black person with functional diversity?

I found very little literature around the intersection of privileged identities¹⁷. In this project, I start from the hypothesis that my social privileges intersect in a specific way: the absence of axes of oppression in which I experience marginalization in my life generates a biased experience and perception of reality, establishes in a specific way the dominant belief systems in me, and generates some supremacist dynamics when I relate to other people and the world.

Intersectional activisms

When in this work I speak of “intersectional activism” or “intersectional activists” I am doing an exercise in atrocious reductionism that does not respond to the definition of intersectionality nor to the infinite diversity of activist and struggle visions and experiences. As we will see throughout the work, the term “intersectional activist/activism” is used to represent an internal or external voice, often in contrast to other voices such as the “supremacist” or the “facilitator”.

Within these “intersectional activisms” I am encompassing the infinity of struggles against oppression in each of the different axes, as well as all the different “intersections” of activist experiences of identities affected by multiple social discriminations. I am also including privileged people like me who try to fight against those oppressive supremacisms that operate within and outside of ourselves. In this case, I use the term intersectional to encompass the various axes of oppression and privilege presented by the *intersectionality wheels*¹⁸, and not necessarily signaling an intersectional approach in the activist analysis or practice. And the term “activist” or “activism” refers more to an ethical intention and attitude to fight for social justice and against the abuse of power, than to a specific practice or action.

I ask the reader not to consider the term “intersectional activism” as a proposed category, but as a metaphorical exercise with limited use for this project. Although my eurocentric mind wishes I could explain the world with a single concept, this reductionism is part of the marginalizing tendency of diversity and dissent from normativity. Facing this unifying vision, Intersectionality

¹⁷ One of the few works I found that discusses the intersection of privilege is *Men at the Intersection of Race and Class: Identity, Centrality, and Privilege Attitudes*, (Bailey Haas, 2019). It is a very interesting study, but it focuses on the intersection of working class identity with privileged identity as a white man, and not just intersection between privileges. https://digitalcommons.macalester.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1046&context=psychology_honors

¹⁸Intersectional wheels are graphic tools to present the multiple axes of inequality and help us locate our experience of privilege and oppression. <https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Interseccionalidad#/media/Archivo:Interseccionalidad.png>

and many struggles against oppression make precisely the opposite proposal: let's stop trying to encompass human diversity under a single vision, identity and appearance, and let's open our minds, hearts and bodies to the infinity of ways to inhabit this life. With this project I tried to analyze and understand how this supremacist reductionism operates in me, in order to propose practical tools that help me open myself to a more intersectional and process-oriented vision of the world.

1d. Development and sections of the project

In order to be able to analyze my supremacist and privilege patterns, I first present the approach from which I perform this analysis. In section 2, I explain some basic concepts of Processwork: *process and state* (2a), *process structure, awareness, and channels of communication* (2b), *levels of reality and experience* (2c), *Worldwork and Deep Democracy* (2e), *the conflict and its phases* (2f) and *power, rank and privilege* (2e). The first reason I do this is to clarify the model from which this work is framed, and bring it closer to those readers who do not know it. The second, to present my own subjective understanding of it, since it is a very broad and fluid methodology that always allows some adaptation to the style and personality of each person who applies it. And the third, to include some hypotheses about the relationship between Processwork and intersectional activism, which are important in the focus of this work. In section 2 I already include the “intersectional question”: how is the theory and practice of Processwork crossed by the various social privileges and unconscious supremacisms of many of its creators and those of us who apply it in the world?¹⁹

In section 3 (*Activism, privileges, processwork and me*), I explain how I became so interested in this topic and ended up doing this project, and I explore the external and internal debates that preceded it. First I explain my *personal history in relation to power, activism and social privileges* (3a), which led me to want to start this project. Then I analyze the dynamic I experienced when trying to start this work, with an internal critic who paralyzed me by telling me “*who are you to talk about social privileges?*” (3b). I then delve deeper into the relationship between Processwork and Intersectionality, showing an active debate in the facilitation environment and within myself, between “*pure facilitation*” and “*intersectional facilitation*” (3c). I end section 3 by showing an inner work exercise with which I processed these and other issues while writing this project, through an “*inner group process*” (3d).

I have experienced bad moments in my life, but they have never been due to my social identity. That configures a very specific experience of privileges, relationships and the world. That is my field of study, analysis and proposals, in which I use myself as a sample: what patterns of behavior are generated by the intersection of high social privileges like the ones I possess? How are they configured and executed? What are the belief systems, the logic that surrounds them and makes

¹⁹ This question is an open debate in the various communities of Processwork and other facilitation methodologies and therapies, and it requires much deeper and broader work than the one I present in this project.

them work? That is the central focus of this project, which is developed mainly in section 4 (“(Common?) *Patterns in High social Privileges?*”), in which I expose and analyze *my supremacist patterns and belief systems* (4a), *my reactions to feedback* related to my social privileges (4b) and my associated *altered states* of consciousness (4c).

As we will see in section 4, supremacist “algorithms” way of functioning can be overwhelming and very difficult to stop. That is why in section 5 (“*Tools for working on my privileges and supremacy patterns*”) I propose some practical exercises to help us become more aware of these belief systems and behaviors, and thus be able to reduce our impact on other people and open ourselves more to their feedback. I propose some reflections to connect with *our source of commitment to this work* (5A), and to be more *aware of our power, rank and privileges* (5B). I also explain the dynamic of the *Inner Group Process* (5C), I propose an exercise to train our *beginner's mind and our not-knowing skill* (5D) and I develop a small guide to work with each of our *phases of conflict* (5E). Next, I give some clues and exercises to explore our *supremacist behaviors and belief systems* (5F), our *reactions to feedback* (5G) and our *altered states* (5H), as well as our *edge to global grief* (5I). Finally, “*A Home on Earth*” exercise can be useful as a *First Aid Kit* when we get stuck with this work.

1g. About the validity and usefulness of this work

This project has some potential uses and benefits, as well as some potential risks and dangers. The potential benefit is to “advance work,” and “save the trouble” for oppressed people: the vast majority of my awareness of privilege comes from the previous work of oppressed people, whether writing books, doing workshops, or putting their body into social movements, but also giving me feedback, arguing with me and relating to my unconsciousness and supremacisms –or those of other people with my same privileges. Part of the intention of this project is to commit myself to taking responsibility for the privileges I have and their impact, and to help and encourage others like me to do the same.

The risks associated with this work -and other related proposals- are several. On the one hand, believing that by doing so “we are better” or “we are deconstructed” can generate the opposite effect to the desired one: feeding supremacism and closing us off to feedback. This work will be counterproductive if the result is that we end up using it to defend ourselves against an accusation; if we begin to believe that by doing internal or group work on the topic “we are no longer sexist,” or that “we are better than other white people who do not do it”; if we forget that we have been carrying supremacism for many generations, and that it may take at least as many generations to get rid of it; if we become “those who work with their privileges” and disconnect from the humility necessary for this work.

On the other hand, doing this process without continuous feedback from people who experience social oppression is insufficient and potentially dangerous, as it can lead me to believe that I

understand and can interpret experiences that I have never experienced in my own body. I believe that doing inner and individual work on our experience of privilege is essential and necessary to change our impact on the world. To the same extent, I believe that it is necessary to work in groups of equals (men, whites, straight or any other normative identity that grants us privileges) to learn to mutually challenge us and explore new ways of relating –to generate new patterns that break with hegemonic mandates (although the purpose of this work is not to work with groups, which would be enough for another project, I believe that the analysis and exercises that I propose here can be used in group contexts). But furthermore, this work will be of no use if we do not train ourselves with the immense amount of literature and training that oppressed people offer us -and remunerate it fairly so that it does not involve a new abuse of our privilege.

And remember: *nothing is just about privileges and oppression* –people are much more than just their history of social discrimination. But *everything is always about privileges and oppression* –to some degree, everything we do is shaped by our positionality and personal experience of power and marginalization in the world.

2 | Processwork Theory related to Intersectional Activism

NEVER EXPECT PEACE 30/1/2023²⁰

*Life is chaos, transformation,
just life happening.
Constantly,
randomly constant.
Peace only exists
as perception, when you accept,
when you embrace chaos
and allow yourself to be transformed by it.*

*If you perceive everything as calm, still,
it is because you are moving at the speed of life.
Don't worry, you will soon stumble,
it would be too monotonous otherwise.*

In this section I explain my understanding of some Processwork basic theory and concepts such as Process and State (section 2a), process structure, awareness and channels of communication (2b), the levels of reality and experience (2c), Worldwork and Deep Democracy (2d), conflict and its phases (2e), and power, rank and privilege (2f). I talk about “my” understanding for two main reasons. The first reason is that Processwork is a *phenomenological*²¹ methodology, in which reality is studied as it appears in the subjective experience of the person (or relationship, or group, or society) and so the understanding of the theoretical and practical process-oriented framework is also a subjective experience -at least to some degree.

The other reason is that in this section I also try to explain, contrast and review some of these processwork concepts *through intersectional and activist lens*. Again, just to some degree, in this case because of my limited knowledge about intersectionality -as I already mentioned in the Introduction. How do Processwork, Intersectionality and activism's theory and practice relate with each other? How would they analyze each other's belief system and tendencies when working with privileges, diversity and identity? Can they co-exist, collaborate or integrate in each other? In this section I try to give my subjective *theoretical* hypothesis and answers to these questions -while in section 3 I will explore more the *practical* and personal experience that lead me to these questions in the first place. This is not a deep theoretical comparison between methodologies, but a personal and very limited reflection on two frameworks that I love and trust in my dream for a better world.

²⁰ Poem I wrote when I began to write this project.

²¹ [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phenomenology_\(philosophy\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Phenomenology_(philosophy))

2a. Process and state

Process is that which proceeds. It is measured against time, it is the opposite of state—that which is static. Processes are described by verbs, states by nouns.

– Joseph Goodbread, *The Dreambody Toolkit* (1987)

When someone asks me what Processwork is, I tend to forget the most basic things. I explain the concept of Dreambody, the analysis of the structure of the process, levels of reality, channels of communication and amplification, deep democracy or phases of conflict²². But from time to time I remember a seminar in which our teacher Gill Emslie told us something like: “Processwork is a very complex methodology, which takes many years of study and practice, only to end up discovering that it is tremendously simple.” After 10 years of training in Processwork, I have learned that going back to the essentials, going back to the most basic, usually helps find answers to the most difficult questions.

In the case of Processwork itself, the most basic thing is precisely the concept of *process*. The word process comes from the Latin word *processus*²³, from *procere* –which means advance, march, progress, development (*pro-* forward, and *-cere*, go, walk). The process is that which is in motion, that is changing, that evolves. If we stop to observe the Universe, nature or interactions, everything is constantly changing. In a sense, in life “the only thing constant is change,” as Heraclitus of Ephesus²⁴ said.

Heraclitus himself also defined the *enantiodromia*²⁵ or regulatory function of opposites. C.G. Jung would take this concept as the basic law of his Analytical Psychology²⁶, seed of Processwork. If we stop again to watch the Universe and nature, we will see how opposites govern cycles, passage of time and balance: day and night, life and death, light and darkness, heat and cold. And the opposite of process, change, movement or advancement, is the constant, the still, the static. In Processwork we define a “state” as the momentary snapshot of a process. The word “state” comes from the Latin verb *stare* which means “to stand still.”

We, human beings, need states –static, graspable and recognizable concepts, patterns and structures– in order to survive. We need to know more or less who we are, where and what we live on, how reality “works”, in order to be able to inhabit it safely. However, in a certain sense, if everything is constantly changing, those definitions have changed at the moment we name them.

²² I defined some of this concepts in the Introduction, and I will go deeper in some of them during this section 2

²³ <https://etimologia.com/proceso/>

²⁴ <https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Heraclito>

²⁵ <https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Enantiodromia>

²⁶ Jung, Carl (1990). *Psychological Types*. p. 426

Thus, “states” and “processes” are another opposite of the Universe themselves. But the world of humans seems to have a tendency to move towards states²⁷, into the static, into the defined, and to turn its back on the processes that “want” to happen. To change that state-oriented tendency, Processwork proposes turning your back on “common sense” and diving into the river of process. From this point of view, Processwork would in itself be one more of those opposites that Heraclito’s enantiodromia described. Or, at least, in its approaches tends to support processes more than states –as its name indicates. Processwork also gives importance to the meaning of the states, for example when working with altered states²⁸, inviting us to enter in them to discover new wisdom and directions we need to be more aware of.

And what does this have to do with the topic of this project? Well, if we talk about processes, movement, evolution or change, we most likely associate certain qualities with these concepts – for example fluidity, openness or the ability to adapt. If we talk about states, we may associate qualities such as perseverance, closedness and firmness. And in the tension between Processwork, activism and Intersectionality (which I am already beginning to present in these theoretical sections, but in which I will delve deeper in section 3), processworkers²⁹ could have a tendency to prejudge the *intersectional activist*³⁰ as more “static” or closed. Or if that is its quality, to judge it as “worse”, and to value the process-oriented vision more because it is “more fluid”.

However, like in the taoist concept of *yin* and *yang*³¹, both qualities are actually present on both sides. Inside a state, there is always a process-oriented tendency waiting to happen, and inside a process there is always some static quality waiting to be known. *Intersectional activism*s are in part the struggle of fluidity against the static. The “static” understood as a uniform, closed system, in which the only valid identity to achieve is that of the heteronormative white man, and in which everything that “flows” around other experiences of reality is invalidated. Given this rigidity, Intersectionality demands the fluidity of the diversity of divergent identities. At the same time, Intersectional activism needs the absence of change of the “state” to define and defend these other experiences around dissident identities, and to set boundaries to the abuse of privileged identities.

²⁷ Arnold Mindell explained how this happened too in process-oriented methodologies such as chinese medicine, tai chi or yoga in his books *Working on yourself Alone* (1990) and *River’s way* (1985).

²⁸ To get to know more about Processwork approach to Altered and Extreme States, see Arnold Mindell *City Shadows: Psychological Interventions in Psychiatry*, 2009

²⁹ I refer to “Processworkers” as those who try to apply Processwork. This doesn’t mean Processwork methodology “says” this is the way of using it.. Processworkers are human beings, with their belief systems, biases and prejudices, many of them informed by their social identity and positionality, as we will see later. Of course, when I talk about “Processworkers” I am generalizing and talking about a role and not specific people –similar to when I talk about “intersectional activists”.

³⁰ As I explained in the Introduction, the “*intersectional activist*” is more an imaginary role than a person. This role would hold the fight for social justice and equality, strongly standing against social privileges abuse and unconsciousness, structural marginalization and oppression.

³¹ https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Yin_and_yang

And Processwork is a defined theoretical-practical framework – and so, static in some way³² –, otherwise it would be impossible to disseminate it and learn about it. It needs that defined body, accompanied by certain more or less stable ethical values, and by a methodology that at times turns the process into a state (as we will see in the next section), in order to be able to work on supporting the fluidity of the processes.

Because of my training in Processwork, when I am in conflict with somebody I tend to think I am more fluid and process-oriented than the other person. I see this happening to many people who have training in facilitation, conflict resolution, psychology or awareness techniques. If we³³ believe we are only “fluid” and we do not recognize our “staticity”, when we enter into conflicts we can be passive-aggressive. We may use our supposed fluidity as a weapon that gives us rank to defend our position – which is something very static. If I project the state-oriented part of myself into the other person, I may say or think things as “I am trying to find a common solution and you are not”. I believe I am fluid and with perspective (what Arnold Mindell called phase 3 of conflict, as we will see later), but I am actually defending my side against the other (Phase 2 of conflict).

If we are not aware of our “staticity,” we could remain trapped in the confrontational phase 2 of the conflict, not allowing ourselves to open up to learn about the other, about the unknown –therefore limiting our diversity. Fluidity is cared for and defended through states –as Intersectional activism does–, and new states can only exist and be recognized thanks to the ability to *flow* from other states –by fully entering and processing them. Without these opposites, the interaction between *identity* and *diversity* would be impossible.

2b. Process Structure, awareness and channels of communication

Process structure is a self-generating, fluid framework that enables a facilitator to unfold a process by identifying its various emergent parts[...] Some parts appear more mainstream, or closer to the client's primary identity. Others appear more marginalized [...] As a process unfolds, this relationship changes. Marginalized experience is made more focal and explored in greater detail and depth, opening up new worlds of experience.

– Julie Diamond and Lee Spark Jones, *A Path Made by Walking*, 2004, p.40

The concept of “process structure” represents very well the paradox of the fluid and the static. As I defined in the previous section, the process would be impossible to structure –since it is constantly

³² Processwork theory seems to be always alive and evolving, but it needs some structure and continuity -static to some degree- in order to be held as a defined and shared methodology that can be taught, learned and put into practice.

³³ Here I could use “I” instead of “we”, but I use the plural consciously to include readers -not only processworkers- who often identify with being “more fluid,” “more aware,” “more empathetic,” “more understanding,” or “more perspective-oriented” than the people they have conflicts with.

changing. Structures are states, they are ways of organizing something so that it remains enough time to understand it and interact with it –otherwise it would be constantly changing. In order to “work with processes,” we need to know what they are like and become aware of their nature and dynamics. In order to be aware of how the process is happening at the moment, we need to take a photograph, freeze it and be able to observe it without changes. We need to momentarily convert it into a state, and then be able to see what its structure is, so we can identify the dynamics between the most known (*primary processes*) and least known processes (*secondary processes*).

To do that we start by looking at communication signals. These can occupy different simple channels: *auditory channel* (everything that can be heard, verbal and non-verbal), *visual channel* (everything that can be seen, imagined or dreamed in images), *kinesthetic channel* (any internal or external movement) and *proprioceptive channel* (body sensations). In addition, we also observe two “compound” channels, which are expressed through at least one simple channel and one compound channel: *relational channel* (everything that happens in interactions) and *world channel* (everything that comes from the environment, from the groups, from our societies, from nature...)³⁴.

By observing these signals, we can notice that some are more “congruent” (*primary signals*) with the identity of the sender (be it a person, a relationship or a group), and others are less congruent (secondary signals)³⁵. The most congruent or primary ones will be those with which the sender feels most *identified*, over which she feels more *agency* (feeling like she is carrying out the action), more *intention* (whether or not she wants it to happen) and more *consciousness* (being more or less known).

For example, if a person tells you “I’m glad to be close to you!”, we will understand that they identify with the verbal message (*primary process*). But when observing other communication channels, we may see that doing so they push their body back, a message incongruent with the verbal content (which together generates a *double signal*). We would observe this other message as a *secondary process*, the one over which the person has less consciousness (she may not even realize she moved back), agency (she may say it was “a pain in the back” who made her do it), intention (she didn’t want to do it), and identity (since she identifies with being happy to be close to you).

Between both processes, between the primary and the secondary, we would find the *edge* –the point of contact between the known and the unknown. The edge is defined and held by a belief system and by the lack of other models or patterns. In the previous example the belief system could say something like “to be a good person you must always be happy to be with friends”. The lack of another pattern that could say “being honest is key to relate”, for example, doesn’t allow the edge to

³⁴ Julie Diamond and Lee Spark Jones, *A Path made by Walking*, 2004, p.64

³⁵ Joseph Goodbread, *The Dreambody Toolkit*, 1987, p.37

dissolve. At the edge, double signals and *altered states* tend to occur, but it is also where learning appears.

One of Processwork goals is to facilitate awareness of this internal and external diversity, and by doing that help us be more fluid between diverse states and processes (again the tendency towards “fluidity” we talked about previously), so our identity grows. But since primary processes are by definition more known, the practice of Processwork tends to give more support to secondary processes, to the unknown. It is the secondary processes that bring newer information, and therefore have more potential to generate change. The primary process is closer to the concept of “state,” it is what we are, the most static. Exploring the edge and *amplifying*³⁶ the secondary process (giving it more voice or presence) often brings new perspectives and qualities that help the person’s process flow.

We can observe the process structure in the short term and long term identity of a person, but also in relationships, groups and societies. A group or a society also has a belief system and an identity (with its primary, secondary processes and edges), more or less defined and obvious. That belief system and identity are not shared by nor do they represent the entire population. For example, the society we live in has a belief system that says something like that the white man has a more reliable intellect than other identities. This grants a series of privileges to those of us identified as white men, which cause us to concentrate more social power. This power in turn allows us to continue defending the belief system of our society and ensure that nothing changes. The natural tendency of power is to perpetuate the state in the face of the process. *Status quo*³⁷ means literally “the state in which” things are, as opposed to the way they could be (what implies change and so process).

The process-oriented tendency seeks the opposite. This methodology aims to “facilitate” the *enantiodromia*, that regulatory function of opposites that allows processes to flow. By doing so, we observe that there are some parts (primary processes) that have more power and/or space in the identities of people, relationships, groups and societies. And so we look for ways to make it easier for the secondary processes –the marginalized parts of the identities– to emerge, to express themselves, to have more voice and more power so process and change tends to happen. This is deeply activist. From this analysis, Processwork is deeply activist³⁸.

Of course, and as part of the vision of *Deep Democracy* that I will explain later, Processwork does not only seek to amplify the secondary process. It seeks to raise awareness and relationship, it seeks that the secondary process can be expressed in order to relate more *sustainably* with the primary process. I think the processwork facilitator needs to have an activist position, as they know that the

³⁶ *Amplification techniques* are all the set of interventions used in Processwork to support a secondary or marginalized signal to be more present or conscious to the identity.

³⁷ https://en.m.wiktionary.org/wiki/status_quo

³⁸ I use the term “activist” sometimes as a quality and sometimes as a role. In both cases I am talking about facing power inequality in order to defend “justice”.

only way for this relationship to be possible is by temporarily interrupting the power imbalance. However, sometimes I feel like the “activist” role is secondary to many Processworkers. Processworkers are supposed to be facilitators of awareness and process. The activist role is one-sided, and so it seems more state-oriented. But if as a Processworker I allow myself to take the activist essence, I would be more congruent shouting “Dreamland for the people!!” or “Stop the State, Process first!” –what I am actually defending most of the time when I facilitate. Activism can become the shadow of the facilitator, an unconscious part of ourselves that operates in our work without agency and awareness.

In a way, Intersectionality proposes the awareness and conjunction of the marginalized voices, identities and processes of our society, which are given less voice, less power and less capacity to define the belief system. These diverse identities come together to question the primary social process, to undo the “state” and to allow it to flow again towards diversity and change. And it also does so by relating to the primary process, by temporarily interrupting the power imbalance. By taking voice, by validating itself, Intersectionality breaks the monopoly of the belief system of the social primary process.

In section 3 I will delve deeper into this, but part of the approach of this project is that in many ways, Processwork is deeply activist, and Intersectional activism is deeply facilitative of the process.

2c. Levels of reality and experience

Awareness processes are a fourth-dimensional activity. They notice and can be part of Dreaming, dreams, and consensus reality, but are independent of any one of these realms. Awareness processes move in and out of the other three levels. [...] All of these worlds are empirical, that is, they are real to the experiencer. Thus the awareness processes include the other levels and are real too, but this fourth domain notices the others.

Arnold Mindell, *The Dreammaker's Apprentice*, 2001, p.27

When observing reality, in Processwork we distinguish three levels of perception or experience: Consensus Reality (CR), the Dreamland (DL), and the Essence or Dreaming (E)³⁹.

Consensus Reality is our daily life, it is what we consider “objective”, that about which there is a certain social consensus: the date and time, the place where we are, your name, the defined social structures that organize us, the answers we give to the questions of who we are, what we work on, with whom and where we live...

³⁹ <http://www.aamindell.net/consensus-reality-dreamland-essence>

Below that Consensus Reality is the *Dreamland*, a more “subjective” level of reality or experience. It is where internal and external diversity is expressed –experiences that are not recognized in Consensus Reality. It is the level at which emotions, dreams, projections, fantasy, body symptoms, conflicts, altered and extreme states of consciousness, synchronicities, ghost roles and many other dream-like experiences are expressed.

And then, at the deepest level, there is a series of experiences that we call “Essence”, which we perceive as subtle and not-dualistic tendencies difficult to name in words. For some people they are experiences linked to spirituality, nature, the Universe, humanity or social justice. It might be also experienced as a connection with something larger than yourself, or something that detaches you from identity and material reality and connects you to the universal, and that seems to have an intelligence and movement of its own (what Arnold Mindell calls the *Process Mind*).

As with the different parts of the process structure, Processwork values all 3 levels of reality equally. But since it has been created in a Western culture and has drawn from many sources of other cultures, Processwork and those who use it also have tendencies. The tendency that I observe would be expressed by something like “Western world is too focused on consensus Reality; we need to support the Dreamland more to be able to become more aware of internal and external diversity and unfold the processes that are trying to happen; and what is most marginalized in the West is the Essence, so we have to connect with it whenever possible, it is the most valuable; and yes, we must remember that Consensus Reality also exists.” In a sense, Processwork (or processworkers and students when applying it) might show here another activist tendency: to compensate for the rationalist tendency of our society by giving more space to the subjective and the essential experiences of reality.

Intersectionality places much more focus on Consensus Reality as the structure that generates inequality and oppression. But not only, as Intersectionality also proposes passing through Dreamland to reconstruct Consensus Reality. The social and privilege structures build our CR, and from there they generate the inequality that divides and organizes this world. Intersectionality proposes to bring to the center the marginalized subjectivities of Dreamland in order to become aware of the impact of how CR is constructed and thus be able to transform it. Every Dreamland experience is greatly conditioned by the *structural position* you occupy in CR –by the intersection of identities that define you in the social fabric. When women, BIPOC or LBTGiq+ people express their subjectivities and the effect of oppression on their emotions, thoughts and bodies, in some way they are expressing and empowering their Dreamland experiences as a guide for changing Consensus Reality. Intersectionality does not come to reinforce the rationalist tendency of our society, but rather to question the validity of the “consensus” that makes up our Consensus Reality.

The very fact of being able to theorize about these levels of reality and being able to choose which level to give more value to at each moment might be an enormous privilege based on Consensus Reality. That doesn't mean privileged people are more able to connect with their Dreamland or

Essence experiences than those under structural discrimination. The rationalist belief system of mainstream men and white identities sets lots of edges around emotional and essence-like experiences. Furthermore, in many cases structural oppression seems to reinforce Dreamland and Essence experiences on those who are colonized. Dreams and Spiritual realms are the spaces where colonizers cannot enter and where colonized people might still be free. Martinique psychiatrist Franz Fanon described it like this talking about colonialism⁴⁰:

The first thing which the native learns is to stay in his place and not to go beyond certain limits. This is why the dreams of the native are always of muscular prowess; his dreams are of action and aggression. I dream I am jumping, swimming, running, climbing. I dream that I burst out laughing, that I span a river in one stride, or that I am followed by a flood of motorcars which never catch up with me. During the period of colonization, the native never stops achieving his freedom from nine in the evening until six in the morning.

2d. Worldwork and Deep Democracy

For organizations, communities, and nations to succeed today and survive tomorrow, they must be deeply democratic – that is, everyone and every feeling must be represented.

Arnold Mindell, *The Deep Democracy of Open Forums*, (2002) p. vii.

Worldwork is Processwork applied to groups, communities, organizations, social, cultural and environmental tensions, etc. The philosophy that governs this work is called Deep Democracy. Deep Democracy, first presented by Arnold Mindell in 1992 in the book *The leader as Martial Artist*, claims that all people and all voices are necessary⁴¹.

The concept of Deep Democracy is defined both as an attitude –that of becoming aware of both the central and marginal voices– and as a principle⁴² –that the information carried by all these voices, states of consciousness and realities is necessary to understand the complete process of the system. It is their relationship from the awareness of diversity that can make the existence of a group sustainable.

Like people, groups have a Consensus Reality and some processes that are better known and closer to the belief system and identity of the group. Deep Democracy invites us to value and become aware of them, but also to get in contact with Dreamland and Essence experiences of groups, and

⁴⁰ Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961), p.52

⁴¹ Arnold Mindell, *Sitting in the Fire* (1995), p. 23.

⁴² “Definition of Deep Democracy” - <https://iapop.com/deep-democracy/>

to explore the edges and the most unknown experiences that often emerge around conflict⁴³. Is through exploring their conflicts, edges and diversity that the mythical process of the group is met, and we can begin to understand how its field operates.

When facilitating from a Deep Democracy perspective, we try to be aware of the field of the group –its totality, all that is known and unknown. This *field* seems to be moved by forces of its own⁴⁴ that express themselves through *roles* and *ghost roles*, organized by the prevailing belief system of the group. Roles can be social or contextual positions of Consensual Reality (boss and employee, for example), but also qualities and behaviors of Dreamland (such as "the dictator" or "the terrorist") that seem to express archetypes, essences and universal patterns of the Human Being and Nature, through what Arnold Mindell calls *Time Spirits*⁴⁵ (similar to Hegel's *Zeitgeist*⁴⁶). From this perspective, exploring roles within a group conflict is a process about getting to know the mythic nature of that group – expression of the field in a given time, space and theme.

Sometimes we name roles or Time Spirits that are not present or engaged in the group process, which is what we call *Ghost Roles*. For example, we may be talking about "the police", or "the oppressors". As nobody identifies with that role (it is secondary to that group), that role is not occupied and it is not possible to interact with it. It acts as a ghost that is not present, but has an impact on the momentum of the group and its roles. Becoming aware of how this role is present in the group, inviting to occupy it and express it, allows the group to deepen the interaction and reach more self-awareness.

When we occupy a role or a ghost role, in polarity to another role or roles, we often feel that we are just that. But Deep Democracy reminds us that every role has a diversity of voices within it (*a role cannot be expressed by only one person*), and that every person can occupy a diversity of roles (*a person is more than just one role*). But what happens when these roles are crossed by our *positionality*⁴⁷, by our privileges or lack thereof?

While Worldwork and Deep Democracy bring awareness of the impact of social rank and privilege (as I explain further in section 2f), intersectional activism and decolonial feminism are giving us feedback of a danger: every time we facilitate a process on an axis of oppression where people oppressed by that axis are present, we are putting the weight of our unconsciousness on those people –forcing them to be the party that brings awareness. Taking on the awakener role as an oppressed person can mean experiencing once again the impact of supremacy and unconsciousness –the most probable reaction to their feedback, as I'll show in section 4–, turning these facilitated

⁴³ I will explain more about the practice of Worldwork and Deep Democracy in section "3b-My inner group process"

⁴⁴ Arnold Mindell, *The Leader as Martial Artist*, p. 26

⁴⁵ Arnold Mindell, *The Leader as Martial Artist*, p.32

⁴⁶ "The term "Zeitgeist" refers to the intellectual climate, the habits of thought, the set of opinions, ideas and judgements of a given epoch." Denise Jodelet, 2020:

https://www.scielo.org.mx/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2007-81102020000200019

⁴⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Positionality_statement

spaces into potentially unsafe spaces for those people. That's why many times it is relieving for oppressed people when privileged identities enter into the awakener role and address structural oppressive dynamics happening.

For me it has been very useful to experience facilitated group processes in which we addressed sexism, racism, lgbtphobia or other forms of supremacy. I learned a lot and these are part of the experiences that have led me to be more active in my work with privilege or to write this project. But now I know that many of those spaces were very painful for the people oppressed on those axes, and that many of them felt that those spaces were not safe. They experienced once again that we were using them and their suffering to our benefit. I also know that many oppressed people also found some of these forums useful, as conflict seemed to bring new phases for the group and relationships. As we "sit in the fire of conflict," as we explore the dynamics of marginalization, the boundaries and the "hotspots" of a group, we sometimes feel that we reach other phases –where roles begin to care about "the other side," or where we connect with a common "Essence," or where the atmosphere feels lighter. These changes are what Arnold Mindell calls "the phases of conflict."

2e. The Conflict and its Phases

Befriending conflict opens new paths for processing conflict while minimizing its risks and dangers. One way it does this is by helping us face, rather than avoid, persistent and even threatening conflict.

Joseph Goodbread, *Befriending Conflict*, 2010, p.8

The word conflict bases much of its meaning on the Latin participle *fligēre*, whose root is *flictus*, which means hit. But it does not refer to just any blow, but to a blow "with", as the *con-* prefix indicates union or convergence. It is the convergence, the clash between different elements that generates a conflict. In a certain sense, the *edge* experience described previously when talking about the structure of the process is an experience of conflict. When the most known –what is most "me"– comes into contact or "hits" the unknown –what is most "other"–, a conflict in my identity and my belief system is generated (edge). Conflict, therefore, is the expression of diversity in relationships, both in the internal experience of an individual, in relational interactions, and in group and social tensions.

In Processwork we see conflict as an opportunity to learn more about the richness of the individual, the relationship or the group in which this interaction between different parties is happening. The same we do with symptoms, dreams or other "signals", we see conflict as a process trying to complete. We can look to relational conflicts as if we were projecting something into the other person to have the opportunity to process it. We can see the disturbing thing about the other as an expression of our inner diversity. The problem comes when we don't integrate it or process it and

the conflict gets stuck. Instead of running away from conflict, Arnold Mindell invites us to sit in its fire, engage with it and allow it to cook new realities:

*The fire that burns in the social, psychological and spiritual dimensions of humanity can ruin the world. But it can also transform conflicts into more community. It depends on us. We can avoid conflict, or we can sit fearlessly in the fire, intervene and try to prevent the most painful mistakes in world history from being repeated.*⁴⁸

In *Conflict: phases, forums and solutions* (2017), Arnold Mindell presents 4 common phases in internal, relational and organizational processes⁴⁹. Becoming aware of what phase we are in at the present moment helps us choose which method of facilitating conflict will work best:

Phase 1 is wanting to enjoy. In this phase, individuals, relationships or groups do not want to deal with tensions. “Not wanting to deal with tensions” implies that it is very possible that underlying tensions do exist, but that we are either avoiding them or are not aware of them. In Phase 1 we think mainly about ourselves as an individual or as a group, about meeting our needs and feeling good. It might be a good moment to explore the vision and mission of a group. When this “relaxed” state begins to feel in tension, we are probably moving to Phase 2.

Phase 2 is tension or conflict. To do this, unlike Phase 1, we are already considering “the other:” we begin to pay attention to and be aware of diversity, although for the moment as a source of annoyance, anger, fear, or discomfort. I am me, and you are you. We tend to feel like victims of things or people that “do us harm” and we want to get rid of them. We need to defend ourselves, validate and make our position more visible towards the external. Sometimes it is difficult, and essential, to realize when a conflict is moving from Phase 2 into Phase 3.

Phase 3 is the role switch. Here there is a certain interest in the other side, in the unknown, in the disturbing, and we can even imagine or feel what the other's experience is like. We feel more fluid and open, we explore previously unknown signals and experiences, and we can begin to reach resolutions. It is the phase in which we become aware of our secondary processes, we experience them and we can begin to integrate them. By doing that, sometimes we begin to get in contact with some sense of “unity.”

Phase 4 is that of Essence and detachment. It is an experience in which I am not on one side or the other, but in which that duality does not exist anymore, since we are in contact with something greater. This phase appears as a differentiated one, but it also exists underlying

⁴⁸ Arnold Mindell, *Sitting on the Fire*, 1995, p.18

⁴⁹ Arnold Mindell, *Conflict: phases, forums and solutions*, 2017, p.5

any other phase –if we explore the subtle tendencies of the process. Phase 4 is also open to the flow of all phases. However, it is common to believe that we are still in phase 4 and to be already in Phase 1 (avoiding problems “because we are very detached”) or in Phase 2 (“because *others* do not understand this enlightenment that I am feeling”).

Again, Processwork values all phases as equally valid. Not only that, but it implies that all people go through all the phases at different times, and the concept of “phase” is linked to temporality and change depending on the moment. In any case, due to the tendency we saw before to favor process over the state, the tendency when we apply Processwork could be to facilitate the flow of the phases. But as I already explained when describing the levels of reality (section 2c), I see a tendency to value Phase 3 and Phase 4 more, since they have more “fluid” or process-oriented qualities, and they are more connected with Dreamland and Essence experiences. Phase 1 (the unconscious self) and phase 2 (the self in conflict) may represent that more state-oriented tendency that reinforces identity in the face of diversity⁵⁰.

And how could intersectional activism be related to these 4 phases? Well, in a certain sense, Intersectionality rises from Phase 3 to Phase 2 so those who hold Phase 1 can finally access Phase 3. Let me explain this riddle: people marginalized by our society have to survive in a world that believes they are less valid, a world that gives them fewer rights or that directly tells them that they do not exist or that they should not exist. All this structural oppression tends to be internalized⁵¹, so that the belief system imposed by the white colonial and heteropatriarchal system becomes part of the belief system of other identities oppressed by that hegemonic identity. In a sense, this is living *by force* in Phase 3: I have to internalize your experience and vision of the world in order to live in it. Meanwhile, the *heteronormative white man* tends to live more in Phase 1, since he lives in a world that sustains his belief system and his experience of reality, and in which the structures of social and political organization are built to guarantee his joy and happiness and separate him from the “other.”⁵²

Oppressed identities, which our system of structural oppression forces into Phase 3, and hegemonic identities, which tend toward Phase 1, often meet in Phase 2. This is where the heteronormative white male points the finger at other identities –as “less valid” or as “guilty of their evils”–, and where oppressed identities try to change the rules of the game by pointing out the heteronormative white man and the structures that maintain his hegemony –as responsible for the

⁵⁰ Once again, these are the tendencies I see in myself and in others when we apply Mindell's ideas of conflict phases. But his proposal is actually to be more aware in which phase we are so we can really be in it, to go over our edges (i.e., to be with ourselves in Ph1, to be in conflict in Ph2, to get in contact with the other in Ph3 or to be in an essence-like experience in Ph4), complete the process emerging through that phase, and then organically move into other phases.

⁵¹ <https://ctb.ku.edu/es/tabla-de-contenidos/cultura/competencia-cultural/superar-opresion-internalizada/principal>

⁵² Of course, this is an oversimplification of a much more complex dynamic. Intersectionality and Processwork are both tools that help to go beyond this simple analysis and really connect with the unique -and also shared in many ways- experience of each person in each moment. But I think it is also important to see general tendencies that can shape patterns based on structural power and rank dynamics.

injustices of the world and benefited from them—. In the next section we will explore further into how the structures and dynamics of power, rank and privilege underpin all of this.

And what about Phase 4? Phase 4 could be that place of detachment from identities and union that overcomes all conflicts and allows us to share the greatness of life and the Universe. But I've seen many times how white people with money access to expensive and elitist “spiritual” training and workshops, to end up talking of how the Universe helps them because they are “aligned” with it, without addressing all the privileges and history of colonization that is behind our access to these methodologies and ancestral wisdom. I realize I react when Arnold Mindell talks about Phase 4 like this:

Some people might say “I don't believe in that detachment thing, to hell with it! That's for people who are New Age, or who are dying, or religious. That's not me!” That attitude is fine, it belongs in phase 2, and feeling stronger and fighting back needs to happen. There is no need to push to reach the detachment of Phase 4, that is, the openness to the flow of all phases. When people are prepared, they get there on their own.⁵³

Despite describing that all phases are fine and need to happen, and that there is no need to push to get to phase 4, the last statement polarizes me. Describing access to Phase 4 as something to prepare for, can constellate a sense of elitism, in which Phase 4 would be superior to the rest of the phases and only those who are “sufficiently process-oriented” can access it.

Wait a minute. Here I am in Phase 2. And my “enemy” is Arnold Mindell! I cannot win! What's going on with me? I am writing a Final Project on Processwork, the methodology that he created! And I know he talks of how every phase is important and how the work is about noticing which phase we are in and not trying to push them or deny them. “Being prepared” can refer to when is time, when the process goes that way. Then, why am I reacting like this? Because my activist heart is saying: “white men with power can be very dangerous!” I've seen how not only spiritual, religious and political leaders abuse their power, but activist, revolutionary and facilitation leaders too. In a way I am not reacting to Arnold Mindell, but to the system of oppression and to the role of the powerful white man with social, psychological, spiritual and contextual rank that might abuse his power. That one is me in many moments and spaces in my life. So I am reacting to my potential to abuse power. No matter the intention, the values or the context, power tends to corrupt its “bearers”. That is the complexity of the dynamics of power, rank and privilege we will see now—and during the rest of this work.

2f. Power, rank and privilege

⁵³ Arnold Mindell, *Conflict: Phases, Forums and Solutions* (2017) p.15

Rank is like a drug: the more you have, the less aware you are of how it affects others negatively.

Arnold Mindell, *Sitting in the fire* (1995), p.59

Processworker Julie Diamond defines power as “our ability to impact and influence our environment.”⁵⁴ This can happen by action or by omission, but it is always happening: it is impossible not to have an impact. Shouting or being silent are both communication signals that influence our environment. Our mere existence, whether we do anything with it or not, has an influence on the people around us, as well as on nature. In this sense, *all* people *always* have power, as it is an essential quality or energy of our existence and relationship with ourselves, with the world and with others. However, we know very little about how it works and it is usually a taboo topic that is difficult to delve into. Like Diamond, I believe that from school we should train ourselves in power and its use:

No matter how much we hate it, no matter how much evil has been done in its name, we cannot do away with power [...] It belongs to the human condition, no more uncommon or complex than jealousy, love, or attraction.[...] Power is an interpersonal and psychological dynamic that forces its way into every interaction, from the boardroom to the bedroom. [...] Power is neither good nor bad; it is energy, a human drive to shape the world, influence others, and make an impact. We need power. Power may be difficult to master, but it's vital to have. It's generative and creative.

Julie Diamond, *Power: A User's Guide* (2016), p.14

However, although all people always have power and are always making an impact, we are not usually aware of that impact. On the one hand, because this impact happens “in the other”, so we can only experience it (and never completely) when we are in Phase 3. And on the other, because we have a tendency to connect more often with our *low rank*, with feeling victims and without agency. Having an impact on others does not necessarily mean that we identify with that power, that we are aware of it, that we have the intention to impact or that we feel agency over that power (and therefore, having power does not mean that it is a primary process). The *internal* experience of power does not always coincide with the *external* experience –with how it impacts on others or how they see us.

Diamond describes two types of power: *social power*, that which society grants us, and *personal power*, that which we feel as an internal experience. The first is given to us by how much who we are corresponds to the values of our society. Sometimes we can also earn some of it because of our personality or our “achievements” in life, but only if they match those social values. Personal power is that which has to do with our psychology and spirituality, with our abilities, innate or acquired,

⁵⁴ Julie Diamond, *Power: A User's Guide* (2016), p.3

to face problems and conflicts, to have an impact and influence on others, to achieve what we set out to do, etc.

When talking about power, in Processwork we also usually use the word “rank”. *Power* is the energy, the quality; *Rank* is the position that our power generates in relation to other elements, structures and people. We usually differentiate social rank, contextual rank, psychological rank and spiritual rank. The first two refer to social power, and the next two refer to personal power.

Social rank is built with the values, biases and prejudices of the society in which we live. It is similar to what is known as *social status*⁵⁵ in sociology studies. Social identity will give us less or more rank based on factors such as gender, race, social class, nationality, age, sexual orientation, education, religion, physical and mental health, physical ability and appearance, etc. The *contextual rank* is that which occurs in spaces or groups within that society that do not share all of its values: for example, in a black women activist group there are belief systems that are different from those of the society in which that group exists. In this group, more value is given to other identities (black women activists, for example), and at the same time social rank will continue to have an effect on this group (social rank does not necessarily disappear just because there is a different contextual rank⁵⁶).

The *psychological rank* is the position that gives us personal power. Feeling confident in ourselves⁵⁷, in our use of words, in our decisions and actions, in relating to other people and the world, in overcoming difficulties and conflicts or in managing our emotions are some traits of a person with a high psychological rank. These qualities will not only be perceived internally, but they will be perceived externally and will have an impact and influence on those around me. Just think about a “confident” person you know and the impact their presence has on you –how they move, talk, behave, the atmosphere they hold. *Spiritual rank* is similar, but it has more to do with being connected to something larger, a purpose or meaning, a righteousness, or something on an Essence level – such as social struggle and justice, a religion or Nature and the Universe. Rather than having power based on confidence in ourselves as an individual, it is based on trusting something that goes beyond us.

⁵⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_status

⁵⁶ I will deepen more about this later, as it is part of the debate between “pure facilitation” and “intersectional facilitation” roles we’ll explore in section 3. But let’s take the previous example further to understand this statement: if I enter into that black women activist group, I will have a very low contextual rank, as I hold the identity of the oppressor. But this context is embedded in the society: if I have a problem, I can call the police, for example, and racism and sexism will most probably operate to defend me from their contextual rank. And that potential use of my social rank is present in the context, in the way they relate with me, as they know I have all the social structure to support me. Social rank might momentarily dissolve into the contextual rank dynamic, but it will always potentially operate as long as we are inside that society. My social rank is always a potential threat for oppressed identities.

⁵⁷ Many times psychological rank has to do with loving ourselves, sometimes because people around you helped you to have a good relationship with yourself, sometimes because you have had the opportunity to work on yourself and your self-hatred or internalized oppression.

And the privileges? The word “privilege” comes from latin *privilegium*, composed of the words *privy* (oneself, particular, own, private) and *legalis* (related to the law)⁵⁸. It is therefore a word that refers to laws that benefit specific sectors of society, specifically those who write them. Privilege is an advantage over others, and therefore is based on the inequality generated by the dominant belief system and structures in a society or context. Feminist and anti-racism activist Peggy McIntosh⁵⁹ defines privilege⁶⁰ as (1) unearned benefits you get just by belonging to a social category; or (2) an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was “meant” to remain oblivious. Privileges are established based on social and contextual ranks, not psychological and spiritual ones.

Privileges, as with power, are usually “appreciated” much more from their lack than from their wealth. That is, you can have a lot of power and many privileges, and not have any consciousness of them, and even feeling very “disempowered” and a victim of others, and not seeing that there are others with much less power and privileges than you. However, when you suffer from the disadvantages and abuse of others with more power, it seems to be more obvious that the other has more power than you⁶¹. Whether we have more or less privileges, we all have areas of our lives in which we have more rank, with which we do not tend to identify, and others with less, with which we tend to identify more. Later in this work I will explain the importance and ways of connecting with both our low and high rank experiences with more awareness.

When working with privileges, as in other areas, Processwork puts the focus on awareness. It gives importance to realizing how power influences interactions, how the different ranks are expressed through communication signals, how these ranks are fluid and change depending on each context and situation, and on how each person has access to some source of power. From this point of view, a white heteronormative man can have a high social rank but a low contextual, psychological and/or spiritual rank, while a black racialized trans woman can have a very low social rank, but be connected to a deep sense of justice, have overcome great difficulties in her life and have a strong and united community of equals that gives her great contextual, psychological and spiritual rank.

What does intersectionality activism do? It makes visible how social rank affects everything in life. And it builds a theoretical body, communities, mutual support networks and social movements to empower the contextual rank, the psychological rank and the spiritual rank of people with low social rank, so that they can have access to the power that heteronormative white men privatize through social rank and structures.

⁵⁸ <https://etimologias.dechile.net/?privilegio>

⁵⁹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Peggy_McIntosh

⁶⁰ <https://ycdiversity.org/resources/foundational-concepts/>

⁶¹ Julie Diamond expands on this, as we will see on section 3

In the next section, I will explore my personal relationship with my power, rank and privilege through my life, and I will deepen more into the “activist” and “facilitator” roles in Processwork and myself, and how they can learn from each other, share goals and work together.

3 | Activism, privileges, processwork, and me

How did I arrive to this final project? How has my experience of power, privileges, and rank been throughout my life? What is so complicated for me about dealing with all this? Why do I find it so potentially useful to combine the visions and tools of Processwork and intersectional activism? In this section I try to answer these questions describing *my path through power throughout my life* (section 3a), *the great inner critic* that overwhelmed me when I began this work (section 3b), *the tensions* I observe today between “pure” and “intersectional” facilitation (section 3c) and how I have begun to *process all of this within myself through “inner group processes”* (section 3d).

3a. My path through power, activism and privileges

The way we use power depends on our self-perceived power. Alongside our multiple, objective powers are our self-perceived feelings of power. Since how we feel largely dictates our behavior, our self-perceived power plays a big part in how we use power. If our self-perceived rank is low, we can be tempted to use our social rank in self-serving ways.

Julie Diamond, *Power: A User's Guide* (2016), p.79

I am a white, cis, heterosexual, middle-aged man, with financial resources, “healthy” and with normative physical and cognitive abilities. Already as a teenager I had almost all of those identities (except middle age). I identified with the gender that I had been assigned at birth (male), also as white and heterosexual, my parents had a couple of stores that gave them a lot of financial solvency, my cognitive abilities allowed me to be a very good student, and my body allowed me to do many sports.

Well, a correction: I don't know if I “identified as/with”. I just didn't think much about it. This is one of the peculiarities of having privileges: you do not usually appreciate them, you are not usually aware of them, they are “normality,” reinforced by the supremacist belief system prevailing in your society and by the centrality of your identity in movies and books characters, in the idols of your culture and in the occupation of positions of political and economic power. This means that when we relate to our privileges we are in Phase 1, that is, we do not even consider them as a problem or we are not even aware that we have them. There is no problem. In contrast, the absence of privilege and low rank experiences are often easier to identify. One of the reasons could be in our biology, and this is how Julie Diamond explains it⁶²:

⁶² Julie Diamond - *Power, A User's Guide* (2016), p.58

[...] low rank is a stronger emotion than high rank. [...] From an evolutionary standpoint, low rank is a matter of life and death: you're at the mercy of something or someone with greater power. You could be killed, hurt or eaten. It's a classic fight, flight, or freeze moment. Even if we're not physically threatened, we still respond with the same surge of hormones. Our emotional brain doesn't parse probabilities. A curt email or a demeaning look can trigger the same reaction as a charging tiger. [...] psychologists have demonstrated what they refer to as the negativity bias: negative events, emotions, and memories take precedent over positive ones, every time.

And so, in my adolescence, despite all the social privileges I had, I identified with my low rank. The moments in which my friends, my classmates, or my teachers hurt me had much more emotional significance for me than those in which I abused my power or hurt others.

No one in charge

I remember the first years of high school as hard. All the comfort and security I had enjoyed in my privileged childhood seemed to suddenly disappear. The atmosphere in my class was violent, there were numerous cases of bullying –including some of them towards the teachers, who did not seem to have the authority or ability to control us. I did not have much *psychological rank* (my parents' way of giving love was always based more on keeping me away from problems than on teaching me how to face them⁶³), or *spiritual rank* (I received an atheist and rationalist education disconnected from any type of spirituality⁶⁴). I was a good student and got good grades, but my *contextual rank* wasn't very high either as this was not the most valuable quality in the violent context of my high school.

Despite my social rank, I felt with a very low rank, especially at certain moments when I was also a victim of insults and physical violence. But I was also an aggressor: children with a lower social rank (especially due to their physical appearance or their cognitive or psychological abilities) received harm from the same aggressors as me, and yet, instead of allying myself with the victims, I allied myself with the aggressors –as a strategy to divert the violence towards victims other than me. I didn't like doing harm, and when I realized I was doing it I felt terrible. But I felt “that I had no other option,” that it was the only way to “ally myself with power” and stop the violence from coming towards me.

⁶³ Even though I felt loved and valued by my family in my childhood, my lack of confidence in myself (my low psychological rank) had more to do with the lack of resources and practice to deal with relational and social conflicts, and to feel capable, autonomous and independent in the world.

⁶⁴ My parents rejected the traditional catholic education they suffered as children during Franco's dictatorship, and so they offered us a scientific education. I am very grateful for that, even though I missed spiritual experiences like the ones I found later in connection with activism and Nature.

This experience in which we feel victims of other people's power and even of our own power, I believe is one of the evils of this world upon which the culture of violence and abuse is founded. There are moments in my life that I realize that “no one is in charge” of the world. In a sense, there are not super powerful rulers that decide everything, because even they feel powerless and not accountable for the impact of their decisions. No one seems to fully identify with all their power. Big nations presidents, tech companies CEOs or the leaders of major international organizations often talk about themselves as victims of external forces beyond their control, like “the economy” or “the market” or “the international situation.” It seems like nobody wants to fully take their power, so nobody is responsible for the pain of the world.

Finding power by fighting power

Let's go back to my high school. How did I get out of that circle of violence? How did I find a personal source of power? By training my resilience? Facing the aggressors? Allying myself with other victims? No: By becoming an anarchist. Yes, one summer I “became” an anarchist. At the end of a high school year I wore a Quicksilver sweatshirt and side parting, and when I returned in September I wore an anarchist t-shirt, spikes, and an attempt at a mohawk. In between, during a summer camp a friend asked me what music I listened to, and when I answered he explained to me that I was an anarchist. It seemed wonderful to me! I finally had an identity with which I felt comfortable and that supported certain beliefs and sensations that inhabited me. And suddenly I had an almost *spiritual rank*: I was connected with anarchism and its history, with social justice, with the revolutionary struggle, with something bigger than me. And when I returned to school after the summer I felt that I was a little cooler, that certain people who had rejected or avoided me at other times, came up to me and recognized me, that I had friends again.

[An aside here: I said that I didn't have much psychological rank because I didn't know how to deal with problems, and that being a good student didn't give me much contextual rank. But if I had received anything from my parents, it was the message that I was “very intelligent.” Being intelligent and having knowledge were two highly valued qualities in my house. And that supposed intelligence did give me psychological rank in the sense that it helped me feel good about myself. What's more: being *the one who knows* may have been the greatest source of psychological rank in my life. And by “becoming an anarchist,” suddenly there was a framework upon which to pour my rationalism and my dialectic abilities that made me feel more powerful. I will return later to the topic of knowledge, key in the dynamics of social oppression.]

From becoming an anarchist everything was “easier:” Identifying my group of friends, my interests, what music to listen to, my place in the world. I joined an anarchist collective in my town, I started a punk band, and I had my first girlfriend. Then I “rebelled” against my family system: I didn't start a degree but instead started working as a waiter and left home. Two years later I moved to Madrid and started studying Environmental Sciences (of course, a degree paid for by my parents). I was

active in the student struggle against the Bologna Plan, in the squatting movement, in the struggles in defense of the Earth. I spoke a lot at assemblies, organized projects and demonstrations. I had a lot of power, a lot of influence, a lot of impact.

And I enjoyed it, but not from the awareness of having power. My power and my privileges allowed me to “feel fulfilled,” to do things that I liked and were passionate about, to invest my time and my energy as I wanted. My social, contextual and spiritual rank allowed me to have great influence in my groups, so that my proposals were more valued than those made by other people. But all I saw was that “I was doing good things,” that I was “a fighter for justice.” As an anarchist, power was something to point at outside of me. I found my inner power by fighting the outer power.

Privileges? Me?

In a Squatted Social Center in which I participated in Madrid, a colleague began to measure the intervention times of each person and their gender. In another subsequent assembly, he brought data and graphs that showed how men, despite being fewer in number in the assembly, took up much more speaking time, and our proposals were taken into account much more than those of the women in that assembly. Furthermore, among those men, a companion and I took up more than half of the time of the assemblies between the two of us. I remember both of our perplexed reactions: “Really? Do we talk that much?” We were not trying to defend ourselves: it simply did not correspond to our perception of reality. Until that moment we both lived in our unconsciousness of privilege, well immersed in Phase 1, and we just “were” in the assembly, as any other member of the assembly, enjoying “the pleasures” of social activism.

I remember that moment as the first moment in which I actually became really aware of my privileges and the impact of my social rank. I found it hard to assume it, as I was still identified with that teenage boy who had a hard time in high school and felt powerless for “not being cool enough.” How could it be that I was now abusing my power? Yes, I knew that we lived in a sexist world, but until now it was something to point out to others, not to myself. I had had previous feedback and signals from women about my unconscious sexism, but that same unconscious sexism had not given them enough validity or importance. Now, since it was a man doing it with data and graphs –and so talking directly to my “rationalistic man”-, I no longer had a way to escape reality.

Feminism was more and more present in social movements, in squatting, in my circles, and it was asking for responsibility to be taken. I tried to address this by participating in some men's groups, but as my life began being quite nomadic and unstable (for some years I did not spend more than 6 months in the same place) that work did not have serious continuity.

Facing the problem: necessary, but not sufficient

Feminism and other social struggles became stronger and stronger in the last decade, making it a little less easy for people with more privilege to continue with "business as usual". The intersectional voices of other women, LGBTiq+, and/or BIPOC people from the Processwork community, together with a men's group who invited me to participate in it with them to face our sexism, helped my awareness of privilege to expand and to begin to take this work seriously. Little by little, I was admitting that sexism (in addition to racism, LGTBiq+phobia, ableism, sanism, etc.) was part of me and that I needed to confront it.

I think the first step in dealing with a problem is acknowledging that it exists. The first step to work on our privileges is to admit we have them. The first step in dealing with our supremacism is to address that we are sexist, racist, ableist, homophobic... Yes, we don't want to be those horrible things, but yet we are, and most of the time we behave in that way –even if we don't want to. We are part of a supremacist culture that gives those who look like me more power, privileges and value than any other person around. And that structure and belief system educates us to use and abuse that power every single day, every moment we live in this world, so it is basically impossible we are not supremacist to some degree. Maybe after many generations living in a non supremacist world, we could say we are not supremacist anymore, but we are far from there. So let's begin admitting reality.

The danger is believing that by taking that step the issue is already solved. I have addressed feminism, intersectional voices in my processwork community, and my groups of men, and of white people as what helped me to commit to this work. But the person who most suffered –and still is– the consequences of my male privileges and supremacism for the last 11 years is my partner. No, being aware of my privileges and supremacism doesn't mean I stopped having an impact on those closest to me. In many moments, it seemed the opposite. The inner struggle that facing this reality means for me, makes me in many moments be more egocentric ("It's not fair! With all the hard work I am doing, I deserve more compassion!"), more reactive (as I project my inner critics into people around) and more closed to feedback (as I think that "I already know about this"). Even today I still generate arguments in which all my energy is put into "being right" over my partner, whatever the consequences. Many times I realize later how my male supremacism was part of what I was defending, but only when I already have generated a huge impact. So "being aware" is not enough: I need to work on my emotions, my altered states, my reactions and the belief systems and patterns that sustain all those behaviors. In section 4 I analyze some of those patterns, especially in relationship with not being able to receive and integrate feedback, and in section 5 I propose practical dynamics to work on them.

Once I accepted that I had a problem with my privilege and that I wanted to address that problem and not only be aware of it, I found myself very lost: was the work about "celebrating" my privileges

to use them better⁶⁵? Or was it about setting boundaries to them and giving up my power so that others could take some more⁶⁶? Should I also work on the costs and difficulties of having privilege, or should I focus only on my impacts on people with less privilege⁶⁷? What do I do with my privileges? Could Processwork help me answer these questions? I decided to focus on these questions at the end of my training in Processwork, and that is how I came to choose this topic as my Final Project: I wanted to make a manual on how to work with high social privileges⁶⁸ from a “process-oriented activism”. But as soon as I got down to it, a new question hit me: Who am I to talk about privilege?

3b. Who am I to talk about social privileges?

She wants you not to measure every step, she wants you not to take extra steps...

“Quiere”, song by Pedro Guerra

The topic of this project was already more or less clear to me since 2022. I knew that I wanted to explore the topic of high social privileges, with the confidence that Processwork could provide tools that would facilitate that work and make it more effective. It had been a while working on my machismo in a group of men, and also on my white supremacy with a group of white people, as well as through trainings, workshops and books by people experiencing oppression. At the end of that year I passed the Processwork Progress exams, and my next task in my Diploma was to undertake this Final Project. At the beginning of 2023 I started trying to develop it. I started to write, but nothing worked. Nothing made sense. Little by little a critic was growing bigger within me. So big that it ended up moving me into some kind of depression.

⁶⁵ This is one of the statements defended in some Processwork contexts: we need to “celebrate” our privileges, it is not bad to have them and use them, but it is how we use them that makes the difference: stepping into my rank and appreciating the privileges I have helps me to use them not only for my benefit, but for the benefit of my relationships and social justice and equality.

⁶⁶ This is one of the demands claimed from some feminist contexts: men, you need to drop part of your power and privileges in order to leave room for us to take some more, in order to have a more equal share of the power (this claim is similar in other axes of oppression).

⁶⁷ This is a big debate in working with men. The most visible and “institutionalized” line of work, that of the “new masculinities,” is putting a lot of focus on the “costs of masculinity,” on men seeing that the social construction of gender also affects us and thus becoming more involved in changing it. There are other more “activist” lines that criticize this approach, denouncing that it forgets women and that it can further enhance our privileges, and that the work should be focused on the use of our privileges, on how we impact on women and how to stop that impact. To go deeper into this critique, I recommend watching the conference “Interventions with men: a space for review and adjustment of objectives” (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=G1H0LeZnwK8>) and reading “*Masculinidades y feminismo*,” by Jokin Aspiazu (<https://www.ms.gba.gov.ar/sitios/saludmental/files/2020/11/M%C3%B3dulo-2-ASPIAZZU.pdf>).

⁶⁸ Privileges that arise from a high social rank such as being a white heteronormative cis-man.

The double bind experience

What was that critic saying? That inner critic told me “Who are you to talk about social privileges?” At that time I had the idea of doing this project by working with other people: doing individual sessions with people who wanted to work on their privileges, facilitating relationships in which there was a diversity of social rank, working with groups around these topics... Just by thinking about those ideas, the critic swelled, became gigantic, and screamed away any enthusiasm I had for undertaking that work. “No! You can not do it! You are a little white kid, you have no idea about this topic. What do you know about all this? Nothing!”.

This critic followed me all the time, and caused me to get nowhere during my work hours. Then, the same critic started yelling at me, “What are you doing standing there? You are a white man, you have to do something with your privileges! Take responsibility!” It seemed like the critic was placing me in something similar to what Gregory Bateson defined as *double bind*⁶⁹: the critic required two opposite actions from me, in which one contradicted the previous one. But the third factor that defines a double bind is that it is not allowed to comment on the illogicality of the approach. In order to “not allow,” there has to be a power dynamic in which the party demanding that you perform the actions has more power than you, and that if you don’t meet the demands, the relationship will be threatened. An example of a double bind would be a violent father who shouts his son “don’t do as I say!”. If I don’t do as you say, I am doing as you say. It is impossible to give a satisfactory answer, and the lack of power prevents framing this illogic and threatens the relationship –of which you are dependent. But did I have that lack of power and that dependent relationship before the critic?

Talking with other people and working on these issues, I have observed that it is common that when we become aware of our privileges (whether we are men, white, straight, or any other socially privileged identity) and we want to work with them, we find ourselves faced with this alleged *double bind*. We want to *do something* so that those privileges do not have as much impact, and at the same time we feel that *doing something* when having so many privileges is going to have undesired impacts. We have read texts, we have heard voices, there are people “on the other side” (of the axis of oppression) who have told us “you have many privileges, do something with them!”, and who have also told us “be careful what you do, you have many privileges!” We feel dependent on these relationships, as we want their approval as “good allies” so our identity as a “good person” is not threatened. We feel like two contradictory claims are being made of us, demanding that we respond to both, and we feel very disempowered because these people have the psychological rank that feeling connected to social justice gives them, and we are the “bad guys.” And then we fall into the victim role: “It’s too hard, there’s no way to do it right! It’s unfair!”. From this experience, we enter easily into the reactions and altered states we will see in section 4.

⁶⁹https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Double_bind

Working my relationship with the critic

It seemed like this external dynamic was happening inside me in relation to the critic. I spent a few weeks plunged into some kind of depressive state, unable to make progress on the final project and having consequences in the rest of the areas of my life. How did I get out of there? With help. With the support of my therapist Boris Sopko, I was able to show the critic that I perceived *him* (yes, the critic was a male figure) as a storm that made me feel crushed. I told him that our relationship could not continue like this. So I became empowered and stood up to him.

He lowered his aggression, and then we were able to start a fairer conversation: I told him that in my heart I wanted to do useful things with my privileges, and that I wanted to minimize the negative impact of my social rank, but that his voice was nullifying and depressing me, and that from there I couldn't do one thing or the other. He told me, now calmer, that he was afraid that I would do it wrong, that there is a lot of pain in the world and that the white man has tried a thousand times to set himself up as savior and has done just the opposite. That Processwork had been created by a white man like me. I told him that yes, that he was right, that I shared those fears, but that I needed his help to do my best, to try to contribute something without abusing my power. He told me that he was trying to help me with that vision, but that he was afraid that I would believe that I know more than I do. I told him that what I know is what I have lived, what I know is my privileged reality and how it generates a conflict with my activist heart. And that I want to face that conflict, and that I feel Processwork offers me new patterns and tools to work on that conflict.

Then I realized that in reality this project was not going to be that initial high dream of “savior of the world.” It was hard to accept, but it was going to be for me, and about me, about my difficulties in working on this topic, about how Processwork and the little I know about Intersectionality, feminism, anti-racism or decolonial struggles can collaborate to help me with this issue. And yes, I still hope that my experience can serve others like me to work more effectively on their privileges, and thus contribute to the rest of the World.

Feedback doesn't create double bind, supremacy does

Let's back up for a moment: Am I saying that what happened to me with my inner critic is the same as what usually happens when socially oppressed people give us feedback about our privileges? No, because those people are not establishing a double bind. We –the people receiving feedback about our social privileges– establish the double bind with the inner projection we make of these people –the people giving us feedback from their oppression experience–, usually an internal critic. Let me explain why I say this:

- The people who have less social privileges than us and tell us “Do something with them!” and “Be careful what you do!” *are not sending us contradictory messages*. They are

demanding us *to do something* about our privileges, but *to do it carefully*, with consciousness, with responsibility, with effort. That is a valid, fair and enforceable demand. If they tell us “to do so, you might as well do nothing!” it is probably because we are not doing it with the necessary care, or we are doing an interpretation of the original demand. We need to work on being sure that we are getting the actual message of the feedback we receive: as we will see later, the supremacist algorithm makes us interpret the other person's message and translate it to some other message that “works better” for us. We need to remember that *we will always have an edge to accept feedback about our privilege*: that's how supremacy defends itself. We need to doubt our own version of the other people's message, and check and make sure we are truthfully integrating the feedback they are giving us. As we saw, Phase 2 of privilege is pretty strong –as it is supported by the whole social system–, so sometimes we feel like we are in Phase 3, but we are not.

- That supposed power dynamic in which that person “makes us feel like victims” is some kind of an *optical illusion*. As we saw before, we tend to identify with our low rank, and when someone gives us feedback, criticizes us, or tries to wake us up on the issue of privilege, it is natural for us to feel uncomfortable. But we need to realize that that discomfort is actually really *productive* –in opposition to *comfortable tolerance*⁷⁰. Feeling “powerless” in this case is a defensive strategy⁷¹ to not respond to the demand, and therefore is itself an expression of power (in the sense that it has an impact, following Julie Diamond's definition). If the person with the lowest social rank makes a demand for us to take responsibility for our privileges, and we do not comply with that demand because we feel “disempowered,” in the end everything remains the same (as I continue enjoying my privileges and the other person continues to be impacted by them). In the *momentary internal experience* we feel powerless, but in the *external consequences*, in the impact and influence, we maintain the situation that favors our interests. Social rank gives us the privilege of always “coming back to safety:” even if I experience some contextual low rank, it will be temporary. If that temporary rank dynamic doesn't change the outer system, we will eventually come back to the bigger context in which I always have more rank and privileges. We need to be aware of how our “fragility⁷²” operates, how we feel discomfort when our privileges are threatened, how we experience our edges when we face the secondary parts of our inner and outer reality, and stop calling that “low rank,” feeling “powerless,” or being “victims” of others' abuse.

⁷⁰ Jokin Azpiazu, in his book “*Masculinidades y feminismo*” (p.117, 2017) goes deeper on the concept of *productive discomfort* as a guidance for a more effective work: “[...] *working from a privilege perspective is not necessarily a definitive solution. Constantly pointing to male privilege can lead to confusing male privilege with a state of superiority, leading to condescending and paternalistic attitudes towards women and other subjects outside male hegemony. The perception of privilege can lead to its questioning, but also to the idea of superiority that leads to a kind of comfortable tolerance.*”

⁷¹ We will see later the importance of staying connected to our power, so as not to fall into what Robin Diangelo names as “white fragility” when working in our racism (*White Fragility*, 2018)

⁷² White fragility: *discomfort and defensiveness on the part of a white person when confronted by information about racial inequality and injustice* (Oxford Languages).

- The external qualities of my critic had much more to do with *supremacism* (as I told, my critic happened to be a man) than with the people who give me feedback about my privileges. That critic who punishes, authoritarian, who knows more than you and who despises you, has the most abusive traits of the sexist and racist white supremacist man. By projecting these qualities onto the people who give me feedback, I stop having space to understand their anger, and I confuse it with the abusive and supremacist attitude of my critic. It was in the most intimate conversation with the critic, once a boundary had been placed on the supremacist attitude, where the critic provided me with useful information. Actually, this information had already been provided to me by intersectional activists and oppressed people, but I had not been able to fully listen to it.
- Why am I dependent on the relationship with my critic? Why do I care? Because he holds my hope of change, the high dream of who I could be, in the shape of “the one who knows.” He was defining how to be a “good ally” and a “good person.” So he had the power to threaten my identity. The way of becoming independent of this relationship is to have *dual awareness*: yes, I am a supremacist, but I am also a good person. Because of my power and my social identity, I am potentially an abuser. Because of who I am, I am potentially a loving and caring person. Both are true, and I need to go deeper on both parts to stop the paradox and keep working.

Once I processed this relationship with my inner critic and the feeling of double bind, I asked myself the question again: who am I to talk about social privilege? Well, I am a person with many social privileges, a white, cis, heterosexual, middle-aged man, with economic resources, with a normative body, abilities and health, and so on. My *positionality*⁷³ would have a terrible influence if my aim were to study the experience of socially oppressed people. But my positionality is the ideal one to talk about the inner experience of having social privileges and to work on the associated belief systems, patterns and behaviors that generate the relational and social undesired impacts on people with less privileges –and hopefully inspiring others to do this work too. Staying paralyzed is not the solution. Walking, carefully and wanting to learn, is the only possible path, and I think it is the feedback that is being given to me from the outside: “You need to begin to walk this path now, but not over us.”

I was finally clear about what I wanted to do: a project about high social privilege in which I used my own experience as a privileged person, my knowledge of Processwork and the feedback from intersectional activists to find practical answers to the original question of “what do I do with my privileges?”

⁷³Meaning the worldview I hold because of my privileged experience of life and society. Positionality stresses how we *see* and *interpret* reality depending on our social identity, and how this hugely influences the results of social and scientific works and interventions. <https://www.dictionary.com/e/gender-sexuality/positionality/>

3c. “Pure facilitation” vs “Intersectional facilitation”

When I see myself or others doing any kind of large group work, the activist in me gets so excited to see the new Deep Democracy paradigm being used, that I stop thinking about what new things I could be learning [...] even the best of paradigms wears out quickly if it doesn't have some kind of learning procedure built in. [...] Then I remember: feedback is the process student's teacher.

Arnold Mindell, *Deep Democracy of Open Forums*, p.109

Since I began to come into contact with Processwork, back in 2011, I was excited that this perspective addressed topics such as power, rank and privilege. In those years, and especially after the 15M movement⁷⁴, I was aware of how power dynamics played a big role inside social movements and activism. A tool for facilitating groups, relationships and individuals that takes into account the dynamics of power and oppression seemed like a revolutionary concept to me. Thanks to the process structure analysis, I understood how power was a secondary process and a ghost role in the activist and anti-authoritarian groups in which I had been active. Although the conclusion may seem obvious, it took me a little longer to realize how my own use of power was also an “edgy” topic for my anarchist identity –power was a secondary process for me.

My high and low dream of Processwork

I spent a lot of time “in love” with Processwork (I still am, but now it's a more “mature” relationship). I was connected to the *high dream*⁷⁵, with the feeling of having found a “theory of everything” that answered all my questions and that could be applied to all the problems in the world. In 2017 I went to Worldwork⁷⁶ in Porto Heli, Greece, where around 550 people from almost 50 countries got together for a week to do large group processes on topics such as climate change, war, racism, or economic inequality. There I had the opportunity to meet Arnold Mindell and see him facilitate. But I soon became disappointed: Arny did not live up to the expectations I had of him.

I remember a colleague jokingly saying: “Have you noticed that old fellow who intervenes whenever he feels like it and interrupts all the time? Isn't anyone going to tell him anything?” I laughed, but the truth is that it made me sad. It really seemed to me that Arnold Mindell was abusing his

⁷⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anti-austerity_movement_in_Spain

⁷⁵ Processwork term that means the projection into the other person of our highest expectation of a relationship (or project). It tends to happen at the beginning of the relationship, and works marginalizing the parts of the other person that disturb us (low dream signals). As usual in Processwork, neither high dream is better than low dream nor vice versa, but rather we try to become aware of which is more present and how the more marginalized signals are trying to become conscious.

⁷⁶ <http://worldwork.org/previous-worldworks/worldwork-2017-greece/>

contextual rank, and that he had some kind of “license” to speak whenever he wanted –even when he was not the facilitator of the group process and no one had given him the floor. Sometimes he provided nuances and awareness of what was happening, but sometimes it seemed to me like he was doing it simply out of habit, and that no one dared to give him feedback. I also didn’t like some interventions he did around racism, just because of some small signals I observed in him I did not find them “sufficiently conscious and congruent.”

My high dream began to fall apart. I unconsciously expected Arnold Mindell to be the model of the “conscious white man” I wanted to be, an absolute example, a pristine person, perfect in each of his interactions, aware of his power in each of his actions. But why would he be? Doesn’t he himself say that “rank is like a drug?” In addition to his social rank as a white man and his psychological and spiritual rank due to a lifetime dedicated to developing something like Processwork, he had the highest contextual rank that anyone in our community can have: basically, he was “the creator.” But he was no God, he was a human being. How can he be aware of everything all the time? How can it not be difficult to give him feedback with his tremendous rank? Considering all this, how he used his rank was pretty amazing!

I had no direct relationship with Arnold Mindell, so I have no idea how much feedback he used to receive, whether he integrated it better or worse, or how much he worked on the impact of his privileges. This is about me, not about him. Pointing him out as “unaware of his rank” is mainly an exercise of projecting my own unconsciousness onto him: anyone who has heard me participate in an assembly knows that I am still one of the people who takes up the most speaking time, despite my “rank awareness.” Analyzing the structure of my process, “the unconscious Arnold Mindell” would be a dreamfigure representing my secondary process, the part of me I have an edge to and that represents my low dream in working with privileges: the unconscious ally, the white male processworker who tries to be aware of his power and rank, and nevertheless abuses his power.

But then, isn’t Processwork infallible? Won’t Processwork free me from my unconsciousness in the use of my rank? No, Processwork isn’t about achieving total “awareness,” “illumination,” or “detachment.” Following the *enantiodromia* principle, consciousness and unconsciousness are both part of reality, and we can only learn to be more fluid between them. Part of the learning I am gaining from this work is that it might be more important to be open to feedback and to recognize my unconscious abuse of power, than to try to not abuse it –or that both are equally important, in any case.

The decolonial feedback

Processwork is a methodology created and used primarily –not only– by white people from the Global North. On the one hand, Processwork could be another example of what decolonial

thinking calls *epistemological extractivism*⁷⁷, in the sense of having used other cultures and peoples knowledge as part of a framework used mostly by white people. On the other hand, it is also an exercise of coming out of our eurocentric cosmovision and trying to learn from other ways of understanding and inhabiting reality. In any case, it is at least risky to think that this tool is “the” solution for all the world's ills, as I wanted to believe for a long time.

I did not do these analyses when attending the 2017 Worldwork. I do them now thanks to the influence of certain voices that have challenged Processwork and facilitation since then⁷⁸, both internationally, and locally in our Barcelona PW School and in other organizations and schools related to facilitation. Divergent identities, feminists, LGBTiq+, BIPOC, neurodivergent, with non-normative bodies or health, brought and continue to bring a clear message that tells us something like this: “*You are not doing enough with your awareness of privilege. Your facilitation and learning spaces are not safe spaces for non-hegemonic identities, because they are configured from the hegemonic worldview, which perpetuates and amplifies the dynamics of oppression. You need to unlearn colonial patterns and frameworks and open yourselves to the revolutionary and ancestral wisdom that dissident identities bring to you.*” These people put their knowledge, their bodies and their experiences at our service once again, trying to provide us with new perspectives; and in many cases, they receive an insufficient response that once again reproduces their oppression.

In the months prior to writing these pages, I found myself immersed in numerous debates of this type within Processwork contexts. But in these cases we were white people wanting to do something with this information, especially in the face of calls for attention from BIPOC voices. In these debates, many white people positioned themselves in a more *activist* role –in the sense that it wanted to change “the way things are”–, that called for an “intersectional facilitation,” compared to what we considered the *hegemonic* voice –in the sense that it wanted to defend “what already is”–, that defended some kind of “pure facilitation”.

One of the lessons I learned from this process is the risks of positioning myself (as a person with privileges) in any of those two roles. If I position myself on the “hegemonic” side, I run the risk of defending my status quo, using my rank and my power to defend “what already is,” to maintain the “state” of things, to not allow change. If I position myself on the “activist” side, I run numerous

⁷⁷*Epistemological extractivism* is a concept being developed by decolonial authors. It comes from the concept of *cognitive extractivism* by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (an indigenous woman of the Mississauga Nishnaabeg people of Canada), and refers to the appropriation of knowledge from an “attitude of reification and destruction produced in our subjectivity and power relations by “modern/colonial Westerncentric/Christiancentric/colonial capitalist/patriarchal civilisation” towards the human and non-human life-world. Reification is the process of transforming knowledge, forms of human existence, non-human life forms and what exists in our ecological environment into “objects” to be instrumentalized, with the purpose of extracting and exploiting them for one’s own benefit regardless of the destructive consequences that such activity may have on other human and non-human beings” (Ramón Grosfoguel, *From “economic extractivism” to “epistemic extractivism” and “ontological extractivism”: A destructive way of knowing, being and being in the world*, 2016, <https://dialnet.unirioja.es/descarga/articulo/5862464.pdf>)

⁷⁸ It would be more correct to say that it is since then that I have been aware of these intersectional feedbacks to facilitation and Processwork and their organizations.

risks, among them that of ignoring my power by pointing out “another” as hegemonic (and avoiding the uncomfortable and necessary work of dealing with my own rank), or that of supplanting and deforming for my benefit the voice and the real message of non-hegemonic identities who are not present to occupy that role.

A truth that can change the world

With those risks in mind, it felt necessary to process those roles and that polarization. As I delved deeper into both roles, I felt that it was impossible to get out of Phase 2, that no matter what we said and interacted, we were always still “at war” with each other. At a meeting of our white privilege working group there was a beautiful interaction that greatly inspired me to regain hope in this process. We managed to understand a little more what both roles had in common and made them stay in Phase 2: they are both in connection with a “TRUTH” in capital letters, with a knowledge of something that could change everything. We will see in section 3d how this connection with a “truth” can also result in an arrogant attitude.

The “pure facilitation”⁷⁹ voice is bringing a framework that feels revolutionary, whose philosophy of Deep Democracy considers that all voices are necessary for the sustainability of the world. This role believes that this methodology can end the wars and the cycle of violence, and give rise to a new world in which all worlds fit. In the polarization against “intersectional facilitation” role, the “pure facilitation” role is saying “you are just seeing one part, that is really important, but we need to include all voices in order to change the World.” From this analysis, always giving more voice to an “activist” or “intersectional” role than to others, would marginalize other experiences. “Pure facilitation” knows there are always other secondary experiences waiting to be seen, and that to consider just one experience as “the oppressed one” would reproduce the marginalization dynamic over other experiences. Ignoring the fact that there are more types of ranks than the social one, can result in unconsciously misuse power from the marginalized role, reproducing the cycle of violence. “Pure facilitation” role also knows that everybody has power, and that we all need to become more aware of our own powerprint. Deep Democracy brings awareness to those with higher social or contextual rank about the structural oppression dynamic, but it also brings awareness to those with less social or contextual rank about their unconscious power, so every voice can have more agency and relate. From this view, Intersectional and decolonial feminist activists are already included, have a voice within the field and a lot of psychological and spiritual rank. They are necessary to change the world, but this does not challenge the methodological body and practice of Processwork and Deep Democracy.

⁷⁹ “Pure facilitation” and “Intersectional facilitation” were terms used by people while occupying those roles to describe what they were defending. They do not represent Processwork or Intersectionality principles, but two roles occupied by people who claim to defend them. These terms can generate discomfort in the reader, but I decided to maintain them so you can also explore what makes you feel each of these terms. It is another proposal of *productive discomfort*.

The “intersectional facilitating” voice is bringing awareness to all the pain and abuse committed over centuries by hegemonic identities on marginalized identities, and tells the “pure” facilitator that social rank has far more impact than any other type of rank. Every time a white facilitator responds “now is not the time,” “this looks like a group process, we better not open it now,” or “trust my knowledge, I know a lot about this,” the message remains that of “white knowledge is and will continue to be the center for us, and your voice continues to be worthless.” And the decolonial response will be “well, then be clear that your facilitation does not include me and it oppresses me, and I can no longer consent to it; you only leave me the option to fight or leave. Be aware of it and take agency.” Knowing that this has happened and continues to happen due to the immobility of power and the white man's worldview is more than enough reason to never leave Phase 2 until everything changes once and for all, until our hegemonic centrality dissolves. This role feels that this truth is “the truth” that is going to change the world, that is going to end abuse and dispossession.

Here I need to be clear again: these conversations happened between white processwork students, and what I am writing is my memories and interpretations of them. So this is not the “real” relationship between Intersectionality and Processwork, but a simplification of those frames into imaginary roles, based on my inner individual and limited experience of it. In this work it is only useful as an exercise of exploring the experience of a normative white man trying to mix Intersectional and Processwork awareness. But at the time it was important for me to understand that both parties want to change the world and break the cycle of violence, and that both parties believe they have the key to do it. My intention is to become aware of how this conflict occurs within me, make these tensions and this debate my own and process it within myself.

3d. My inner group process

“Those of us who are part of the mainstream do not get used to identifying with having social rank and power. We are starting to learn about those things we took for granted. Now we understand that we can use our privilege to help other people.”

Arnold Mindell, *Deep Democracy of Open Forums*, p.166

As I write this final project, various roles emerge within me. As we saw in the section on Deep Democracy, roles are ways in which the field process expresses its diversity, both in the short and long term. We tend to become aware of roles when they are in polarity –in Phase 2 of the conflict. By being in contact with the issue of rank and social privileges, my internal diversity emerges as an expression of the diverse roles that exist around these issues in the world I inhabit. While trying to write, sometimes a doubt assails me, or a critic begins to attack me, or a block prevents me from continuing, or I feel that I am writing polarized from one role or against another.

I tend to relate Deep Democracy to groups and communities and its Worldwork applications. But just as I find it very useful to use the *structure of the process* (primary, secondary and edge) and the concept of the *dreambody* to analyze a group as if it were an individual, I also like to understand the diversity of a person and their internal conflicts as if they were experiencing an *inner group process*. In several moments of writing I put this later format into practice, which helped me better understand how the field and its roles and *spirits of the time* passed through me as I wrote. I present this exercise later in section 5 as a proposal to work internally on tensions and conflicts around privileges. Here I reflect a summary of some topics and roles that I processed with this format while doing this project.

Proposal of topics, consensus and atmospheres

- How to work with privileges: recognize them, celebrate them and use them consciously; or address them and set boundaries to them?
- Should we make room to recognize “the difficulties” or “the costs” of having high privilege, or would that reinforce privileges?
- Does my final project have any validity beyond me?
- What things are “because of my privileges” and which ones “because of my essence/nature/because I am like that?”
- Do I have enough knowledge to say anything about intersectionality or decolonial feminism?
- Does it make sense to do this work without enough time for the depth it requires?
- Am I exposing myself too much or too little?
- Could positioning yourself in favor of intersectionality and decolonial feminism mean returning to the “easy position” of the activist that points outside?
- Can you be doing this project while continuing to “screw it up” day after day with your privileges?
- Am I responding to only one way of experiencing the absence of privilege and marginalizing others?

These topics did not all come out in one day. They are a compilation of some of the topics that I have worked on doing this exercise with myself. When doing so, as I will explain in section 5, I wrote the themes on post-its. Once I had them all, I would spread them out on the floor and walk around until I felt one calling me louder. On some occasions I had to throw the pen between two topics that were very strong, or group some of them into a single topic. Not chosen topics were saved for the next internal group process. I did not process all the topics I raised separately, but I do feel that I processed them in one way or another included in other topics.

When beginning to do the exercise, the *atmospheres* –how I felt the topic generated some kind of mood in me and around– tended to be “tense,” “sharp,” “challenging” (especially those that posed polarity between the intersectional vision and the process-oriented one, as I explain below). But in other topics I was surprised by other types of atmospheres, some more “heavy,” others more “cloudy,” and some even “light.” Becoming aware of the atmosphere helped me a lot to better understand the starting polarity and experience of each role, as well as the moments of *hotspots*⁸⁰, *edges*⁸¹, and *temporary resolutions*⁸².

Unfolding polarity: the “activist” and the “facilitator”

In general, the polarities were clear and were present in the topic or the initial question, although some were more difficult for me. But the two roles that emerged the most were those of the “activist” and the “facilitator.” This polarity is present throughout this work. The role of the “activist” is that of someone connected with justice and who questions what is established, what is normative, what has more structural power, and tries to change it. The role of the “facilitator” is the one who observes the signals and seeks to decipher the meaning of the process in its entirety, trying to bring awareness, fluidity and relationship between diversity.

Actually, this is “what they think they are.” As I already mentioned, I am talking about me, not about “activists” and “facilitators” of the world. When I feel in the “activist” role, I identify myself with social justice and “shaking everything,” and when I feel in the “facilitator” role, I identify myself with awareness and “making everything OK.” But as we will see in the conversation, both roles have in many moments some kind of “arrogant” attitude –that of “I already know”. This arrogant attitude is not so related with “activism” or “facilitation,” but with the supremacist algorithms we will see in section 4. This is more or less one of the conversation I had between both inner roles:

- *Activist* (challenging the facilitator) - “You feel that you have consciousness, but there are many things that you are not aware of.”
- *Facilitator* - “Maybe I don’t realize about some stuff in the moment, but in the long run it is impossible for me not to realize it: when we observe the signals and become aware of the

⁸⁰ In group processes, *hotspots* are moments of emotional intensity for the whole group, including strong emotions, anger, or shock. They often appear as signals that a group edge has been hit. At a hotspot many things can happen at once. There may be sudden silence or chaos. It is important to notice hotspots, stay with them, and go deeper. When we miss hotspots, they tend to cycle and escalate.

⁸¹ For example, when you feel shy to say or do something.

⁸² In a group process, a *temporary resolution* often happens when people switch roles (Phase 3), when a momentary agreement occurs, when roles dissolve and people become more personal, or when a spontaneous circle forms. It is important to notice these valuable moments of temporary agreement also working with one’s own internal diversity, before the next round of processes and conflicts begins.

field and its process, our identity and consciousness expand and we can understand new realities beyond polarity and conflict.”

- *Activist* - “You thinking you are more aware than me is part of the problem: it is very difficult to dialogue with you because you always have an answer, you are always *so aware of everything*; but you never completely admit a mistake or that you don't know something or that you need help. You are always on top. You tell me “what you say is great!” but in a tone that seems like you already knew it before I said it. You think you are open to the other side all the time, in what you call Phase 3, or connected to something bigger, what you call Phase 4, but in reality you are at war with me, you are in Phase 2. I would like you to be more honest and tell me what you really think of me.”
- *Facilitator* - “Wow, the truth is that by speaking to me with my language of consciousness, the phases and all that, you have made me realize something. It's true, I want to be in Phase 3 and Phase 4, but the truth is that with you I'm a little in Phase 2. Precisely because I judge you for being hooked on Phase 2. Wow, it's a paradox, I love it.”
- *Activist* - “It's not a paradox, it's shit! It exhausts me that being aware of shit makes you enjoy it. I asked you to be more honest and tell me what you think of me, but you begin to talk about paradoxes”
- *Facilitator* - “Okay, I'm going to try it. If I allow myself to go into Phase 2 more completely I feel like... I'm sick of you. You always question everything, I don't feel like you're trying to contribute, I feel like you don't respect all the work that went into doing all this; you only dedicate yourself to criticizing. I feel that you do not have the capacity to value what is on the other side, and that you are hooked on the role of the activist because it is easier to point outward than inward. I think you are very unaware of your own power.”
- *Activist* - “Wow, you actually were in Phase 2! It's funny, but it relaxes me, I feel less tense with you now!”
- *Facilitator* - “What has changed? What has happened that relaxes you?”
- *Activist* - “Well, you admitted that you don't like me. I always feel like I'm bothering you and that you really have no place for me, but you always tell me that no, that I have a very important role, that I'm part of the field and shit like that. By acknowledging that you are in conflict with me, at least you are acknowledging me, I feel like you give me more credit!”
- *Facilitator* - “Yes, I hadn't thought about it that way. It's true, I usually have a hard time making room for it. I feel like you threaten something very important to me, this methodology, this exercise in awareness, all the work I've already done to try to better use my power and my privileges. I feel as if you were telling me that nothing I have done or who I am is of any use.”
- *Activist* - “That's not what I try to tell you, and I'm sorry if at times you feel that way. I don't know if it's because of how I say it or because of your fragility, but for me it is important to make it clear that I don't think that: I know you have done many important things and that you are on a very valid path that can contribute a lot. I think that Processwork can provide very helpful things so that people with privileges have less impact, or a more positive impact. But I need you to be real about that whole beginner's mind

thing, being open to feedback, and not knowing. Most of the time you are not there! When you leave me out, when you invalidate me through double signals, you are not being a facilitator nor are you being faithful to Processwork: you are using it as a weapon and as a rank to marginalize me. Do not do it"

- *Facilitator* - "Wow, thank you very much, it touches my heart, I will try to do better. I get excited, I am seeing you now in a different way, I am seeing you as a role that defends the deep values of Processwork and Deep Democracy: not knowing, awareness of marginalization, the importance and value of all voices, etc."
- *Activist* - "Uhm, cool, but be careful with using me: I understand part of what you say, but I'm also afraid that what you say will cancel me out again. I need to be able to continue being a "free agent," a role that constantly returns to questioning what is "established." I hope you understand, I know you like paradoxes: in order to continue defending the process (what changes) against the state (what is established), I cannot be assimilated by any referential framework, not even that of Processwork."
- *Facilitator* - "Thank you for being so clear. I commit to be more aware and open to your feedback next time."
- *Activist* - "Ok, I commit to remember the part of me that values your work and that has hope in you. But only if I see you open to my feedback and doing your work, otherwise it is too painful."
- *Facilitator* - "Yes, I understand it, and I truly appreciate your clarity".

Being able to value and validate these two inner roles is very important for me in this job. From the process-oriented vision, the "activist" role is that energy of change, it is the secondary process of every process, it is the difference that generates new information, it is the polarity that allows the field to express itself beyond the state, beyond the belief system and beyond the more static primary process. But its nature as a "defender of justice" prevents it from leaving that role and connecting with compassion for the "powerful" role (except if the power dynamic changes).

From the "activist" vision, "the facilitator" is a potential ally, is somebody with social or contextual power but with awareness and intention of change. The "facilitator" wants to use his knowledge and his work in the service of the common good, but it is necessary to shake him again and again, and make him see that the more he talks about consciousness, the more risk he has of being unconscious and to use his speech to perpetuate his power and that of his peers.

As I explained in the Deep Democracy section, when facilitating group processes we invite participants to occupy the roles and polarities as they emerge, as I did with the "activist" and the "facilitator." But we also bring awareness to that which is not present, but is named or perceived as part of the forces of the field: the *ghost roles*. What ghost roles emerged in these polarities between "the facilitator" and "the activist?" These are some of the ones that came out to me:

Ghost roles: the oppressed

This is the most obvious ghost role. Yes, this work is about me as a white man, because that is my positionality and the only experience I can study. But I'm working on the impact of my privilege, so everything I analyze or do has to do with the people on whom the impact of my privilege falls⁸³. As I explained before, doing exercises in which occupying their role has a potential benefit (saving them part of the work and impact) and a potential danger (believing that our experience of the role has something to do with their real experience and close to the FB). With that in mind, I experimented with filling this role at various times as it emerged. This role is the one of the oppressed identities, those who don't have my social privileges in whatever axis of oppression (gender, race, social orientation...), talking to the white heteronormative cis-man in whatever of the previous roles ("activist" or "facilitator"). These are some of the messages I connected with (all messages that I have received many times as feedback from oppressed people):

- **"You are dangerous whatever you do"** : "if as a normative white man you position yourself as an "activist", you are dangerous because you ignore your power and its impact; and if you position yourself as a "facilitator", you are dangerous because you may believe that you are doing well. Plus, you both tend to want recognition and back slaps. Please, understand once and for all that there is nothing you can do to not be dangerous: your privileges make you *potentially* aggressors; your actions from privilege make you *actively* aggressors. The only thing you can do is have more room to recognize it and not defend yourselves every time we tell you."
- **"Once again, everything is about you"**: "I understand that ghost roles are figures that are named but are not present, but you don't even name us anymore. I understand that you are trying to see what is happening to you when working on this issue, and I think it is necessary, but if you do not even mention us in the conversation, we are in the same situation as always: we do not exist."
- **"Stop thinking that we are one identity"**: "if not even you as a normative white man can be reduced to a single identity, imagine us, who are the vast majority of the world's population. We are not "a role," we are not "a voice," we are not "a worldview," we are not "intersectionality," or "the decolonial feminist." We are the rest of the Universe, everything that you are not and even in part what you are too. We are all the possibilities, opinions and experiences. Stop reducing us and simplifying us."

⁸³ Do not confuse it with "activist," "pure facilitator," and "intersectional facilitator" inner roles. Here I am talking about real people with oppressed social identities, it doesn't matter if they are activists, facilitators or none of those.

Ghost roles: the proud supremacist

The *proud supremacist* is the conscious abuser who knows that he has power and privilege and wants to use it to his advantage without caring about the consequences on others. The recognized and proud sexist or racist. This is the role that is most difficult for me to occupy, because my value system is against it. I do not want to give space to justifying their attitudes and beliefs, because I know that they are responsible for the suffering, abuse, death and disappearance of human beings, cultures, languages and entire peoples in the recent history of humanity. But by distilling the essence of this role I end up becoming aware of how their beliefs operate anyway within me in many interactions, but unconsciously. Deeply exploring this role would make for another final project, but occupying it with more awareness is necessary to understand how our inner supremacist works, to address him and to start doing something with him, especially in relation to our inner activist. What does he have to say? And what did my inner facilitator and my inner activist have to answer?:

- ***“I am not a monster, enjoying my power is overwhelming logic”***: “I have a power that gives me benefits, why wouldn’t I want to enjoy them? It is the straightest path to being happy and enjoying life.”
 - *Facilitator* - “Deepening into the essence of this role allows me to recognize and connect with my need to be happy and enjoy: if I enter the role of “martyr” (one of the ways the activist expresses himself), I forget this part of me and it tends to come out in double signals or in other unconscious ways” (for example in the “entitlement/deserving” pattern will see in section 4).
 - *Activist* - “Empathy and awareness of privileges reminds me that I cannot be fully happy in an unhappy world. I don’t know if you are a monster, but I know your belief system is not logical, but dissociated.”

- ***“You are just like me, only more cowardly and less consistent.”***: “You are also thinking about yourself all the time, what happens is that you are afraid to recognize it and be consistent with it.”
 - *Facilitator* - “Sometimes it’s true: in many moments I put my need first and don’t recognize it. This has a great impact on the dynamics of privilege: by not recognizing that I am focusing on myself and not others, I close myself off to feedback. For example, when I am accused of not being caring and I react because I want to believe that I am a “great caregiver,” I do double damage by denying the truth of my interlocutor and starting an argument.”
 - *Activist* - “Being honest and consistent with our actions at least allows us to be facilitators of what we are doing and its impacts, and to be more open to receiving accusations. I don’t think you are brave, I think you have a lot of fear of emotions and relationships. Nobody taught you how to deal with them, so you just deny them. I understand it, but I won’t let you use it as an excuse to destroy it all.”

- ***“If I detach myself from the suffering of others, I can get everything I want, what’s wrong with it?”:***
 - *Facilitator* - “It is true, when I disconnect from the suffering caused by my actions, my aggressor begins to roam freely. I feel calm for a while, but then I feel dead inside”
 - *Activist* - “Thank you for reminding me, I will do everything possible not to become detached from the suffering of others, I could become an actual monster.”

As the “proud supremacist” is a ghost role –the one I find it hardest to identify with– it tends to appear anyway without agency. I called it “proud” to differentiate it from the way in which it actually works through me. It is my most secondary process, so it operates in me without me being aware of it. In section 4 we will explore how much it influences my behaviors, reactions and altered states, especially when working on my privileges or receiving feedback about them.

Ghost roles: the passerby

The *passerby* is the congruent Phase 1, the part that really doesn't want to know anything about this. This is actually where privilege most frequently places us –in the unconsciousness of social rank. By using myself as an example, this project is not focused on people unaware of their privileges; the starting point is that I am a person with a certain awareness of my privileges and from there I explore my limitations. So this role is also secondary for me and this work. This role is neither “congruent supremacist” nor “aware of its privileges.” It is that “inactive” part, which has other things to occupy itself with (and of course that I am also like that for a large part of my life, that’s part of how the privilege works for everybody). What does this role say?

- ***“Life is too complicated to rack one’s brain like this”:*** “I’m not enjoying life so much, I don't feel like I have privileges, I already have a lot of hassle with working, having relationships, repairing the car...”
 - *Facilitator* - “Yes, it is true, sometimes I feel that I don't have enough time and energy to deal with something as challenging as privileges. That’s because this privilege thing is very complicated, I have no idea how to do it and every time I get close to it, everything becomes too difficult. But then I realize if something is difficult, I can ask for help, because we are social animals. And I know deep inside me that if life feels so complicated, it has to do with this disconnection from the community, from humankind –that should be the biggest and strongest community (did I enter in the activist role?) ”
 - *Activist* - “Yes, you did. And yes, it is very difficult, that is why we are doing this project, to try to make it a little easier for ourselves and more useful for the world.

Luckily, doing nothing is no longer an option, I am too aware of the impact my power has to continue hiding it from myself.”

- **“Let’s all relax a little, I think it’s not that serious”:** “Maybe it’s getting out of hand, not all women or black people think this is so serious.”
 - *Facilitator* - “True, when I assume that all oppressed people are intersectional activists, I am stereotyping the vast majority of the world’s population. There is a diversity of experiences and responses and belief systems on all sides and I believe we need to listen to them all. But when I listen to them all, no one of them says this isn’t serious –only privileged people say that.”
 - *Activist* - “Yes, it is important to remember that I am not doing this “because all oppressed people say it.” I do it in response to my own values and my own analysis of reality. I do it because I have agency over my actions and because I know that my social rank has an impact that I have not chosen and over which I want to have more control. I do it to be more the human being I would like to be.”

Ghost roles: the fearful one

This role is not so easy to identify as a social role. I have felt it in many moments while writing, from different places and with different contents, but with similar sensations. It is a role that is alert, that fears that something bad is going to happen. It appeared with two main messages:

- **“Careful! You are going to do harm”:** “you know that no matter what you do you are always going to be unconscious of something, and as the role of “the oppressed” already told you, you are dangerous. You are going to do this project, your voice is going to resonate more than others as always, and you are going to have more impact and you are going to do more damage.”
 - *Facilitator* - “Thank you for the alert, it connects me with sadness and pain; Yes, I can have a lot of impact, I have it no matter what I do. I must not forget it, it must be present in every word I write and in my openness to feedback; and at the same time I know that staying still and doing nothing with my privileges is also an impact.”
 - *Activist* - “Yes, you are going to do harm and you are going to have space to receive feedback. Because not everything is “I have to write the project to help change things.” Remember that you are also doing it for yourself, and that is part of the impact it can have.”
- **“Careful! They are going to attack you!”:** “You are a privileged person who is going to take center stage on this issue, they are going to point out and attack you for being unconscious and for abusing your privilege.”

- *Facilitator* - “Yes, I hope to receive feedback, because it is the only way to continue learning; and maybe some feedback hurts me and it is difficult for me to process it, but it is the commitment I have made with myself and with the world.”
- *Activism* - “Don’t play the victim before you start: the most likely thing is that you will still receive much more appreciation “for being a white man who does such conscious and important things.” Remember that your work will always be valued more than that of other people with less privileges, even if it is about privilege. Be aware of your fragility.”

Ghost roles: the humble one

Of course, if we are talking about power and supremacism, humility has to be somewhere. When trying to connect with power and using it better, being humble tends to be forgotten. From the pattern of “being the one who knows,” it is a very secondary role for me. During my education (both from my parents and from the world) it was very present that I had to know, I had to create, I had to be the main character of my world. Humility is realizing that we are just stardust in a huge Universe about which we know nothing. As my mentor Andy Smith says, humility presents an *open feedback loop*, while arrogance doesn’t. And without feedback, power is just abuse.

The Humble role doesn’t really say anything. It is often the roles with the least social and contextual rank that are silenced by polarity and conflict. In my process, when dancing between my “activist self” and my “facilitator self,” I dance between two active roles, two roles with a lot of voice and protagonism, with a lot of action. We, privileged people, need to train our humility. For centuries, we have been forcing the rest of humankind into that role as the only possible one, as we unleashed our arrogance all over the world. It is our turn to occupy it. I need to learn how to enter, sit and stay in the silent role, the humble role, the one who observes and listens and learns, the one who does not have prominence or centrality. It is key to changing the dynamics of privilege, to changing many of the patterns that we will see in section 4.

Edges, hotspots and temporary resolutions

Doing these *inner group processes*, I found myself blocked in many moments, or reacting, or feeling anger, or moving from one place to another, or feeling that movement inside me. I imagined these moments happening in a group as *hotspots*, as moments when the fire of conflict is expressing itself. These moments allowed me to map, confirm and discover many edges, patterns and altered states that emerge in me in relation to my privileges. In the next section I give a more detailed description of many of them, and in section 5 I propose exercises to work on them.

The *temporary resolutions* were the kind we already saw in the interaction between the “activist” and the “facilitator,” or the conclusions of the interactions with the ghost roles. As many times

happens in group processes, in those temporary resolutions I was left with a feeling of “incompleteness.” I had made a small step forward, but there was still a long way to go. Recovering the concept of *enantiodromia*, there is always an opposite seeking balance. There is always a new secondary process seeking to be more conscious. There will always be marginalized voices wanting to be heard.

The awareness that Intersectionality and Decolonial Feminism adds to this is that it is enough that it is always the same voices that speak, the same bodies that occupy the margins. If the same roles are always at the center, if it is always the same faces, qualities and experiences that guide the process, it is because we continue in a state-oriented tendency. If in our groups, in our workshops and in our facilitation schools there is no diversity, and there are mainly white people, for example, it is because we still have a lot to learn about our privileges and how to facilitate the process of diversity.

This final project is based on the deep belief that Processwork and Intersectional activism are frameworks that can complement and support each other. Although at times they are held back and expressed in Phase 2 (well, more like the roles of the “facilitator” and the “activist”), it is from that “conflict” that new knowledge and awareness emerge. In my case, I am exploring that collaboration to help me use my power and social privileges more fairly and consciously, in the hope that I can help others with similar social rank to do the same, and that this will help our impact on the rest of the world to be more positive, or at least to impact less.

With that high dream, in section 4 I will analyze some patterns, behaviors, belief systems, reactions and altered states that I experience working with privileges, and in section 5 I will propose some concrete tools to facilitate working with those patterns.

4 | (Common?) Patterns In High Social Privileges

In section 2 I explained some basic concepts of Processwork, and I tried to review them from a perspective of *intersectional activism*. In section 3, I navigated my life journey in relation to *power* and my rank and privilege, and I explored some of the internal and external dynamics, roles and polarities around the issues of *activism* and *facilitation*. In this section 4 I want to capture more clearly some of the *patterns* that I usually inhabit in relation to my privileges (so that in section 5 I can develop concrete *tools* and work proposals to deal with them). For each of these patterns I will describe how it operates in me, what consequences I think it has on those around me and I will try to analyze it by combining the Processwork framework with an eye on intersectional activism.

I continue trying to speak in the first person, since this work does not include others (for this I would have to do interviews, individual sessions, group work, etc.). But I included the question “(Common?)” in the title because I think these patterns are not just mine. Many of these behaviors are described by feminism, by anti-racism, by the LGTBiq+ movement, by class struggle and by other struggles against oppression when describing what they find on the privileged side. What’s more, I have become aware of most of these patterns thanks to those feedbacks. I observed many of them first in other people with privileges (much easier and more comfortable to do) rather than in myself (much more challenging), and I continue to observe them inside and out day by day. But since this is not a social research work (or if it were, it would be under the premise of understanding me as a very limited sample of the normative white men), here I present these patterns with the only certainty that I continually experience them in myself.

I have divided these patterns into 3 categories: behaviors; reactions; and altered states. With *behaviors* I am referring to how I move through life, generally unconsciously, based on the social belief system that accompanies my identity (for example, the behavior of pretending “to know everything” based on the social belief that as a white man I am “the carrier of Universal knowledge”). When talking about *reactions* I’m talking about habitual responses (whether or not I express them to the other person) that usually arise in me when receiving feedback about my privileges or my behaviors. In the section of *altered states* I explain experiences in which my consciousness seems to be taken over by a non-ordinary emotional state –which seems to control the agency of my behaviors and reactions for a time.

The *behaviors* have more to do with the supremacism of privileged identities: they are those behaviors that respond to the conception, conscious or unconscious, of myself as being superior to others due to my identity (gender, racial, ethnic, sexual, etc.). The *reactions and altered states* have more to do with the *fragility*⁸⁴ of privilege –or in more process-oriented terms, with discomfort,

⁸⁴ As I explained before, the use of fragility in this project makes reference to Robin DiAngelo term used to describe white privilege reactions when talking about race, but in this case applying to the defensive reactions when the topic of social privileges and supremacism of any axis of social oppression and privilege is addressed: “Not often encountering

edges, and inner and outer conflicts around my social rank. They are the emotional experiences –and related outward responses– that I inhabit when the “safety” of my privilege is questioned, when other social identities question the power and centrality of my hegemonic identity.

All of these patterns build an experience of reality that makes it difficult for me to see beyond myself. I feel immersed in my way of seeing reality, and since the system is designed from points of view similar to mine, I understand that my reality is “the real one.” As we will see, this entire network of algorithms, behaviors, reactions and altered states works like a kind of *virtual reality pair of glasses* whose image proves me, my privileges, and the supremacist belief system “right”. And when we step on someone who was walking nearby, or we collide with a wall, or we lose our balance, instead of taking off our glasses to see what is happening, we try to interact with the real world without leaving our small parallel world.

4a. Behaviors and belief systems

Social belief systems permeate us whether we like it or not. As I mentioned before, the first step to addressing a problem is to recognize that we have it. The first step to working on our supremacism is to recognize that we are supremacists. It is not a choice, it is not something we can “not be.” In a supremacist society, the simple fact of being a man, or white, or heterosexual, or cis, or of having a “functional” or normative body, a “sane” or “healthy” mind, the simple fact of corresponding to the prototype of the “ideal” human being, makes us potentially supremacists.

From the “facilitator” role perspective, we are not only supremacists. In some moments we’ll be supremacists, in some others we will not. But here I am siding more with the “activist” role perspective on purpose. Why? Because supremacism is enormously secondary and it has an enormous impact. Let me explain this deeper: if you ask me or any other white man if we are sexist or racist, we most probably will answer “no”. Just very extreme-right guys would answer “yes” with congruence. So the way in which it operates in me is without agency, awareness, intention, and identity. I don’t want to be supremacist, I don’t identify with being supremacist, I don’t intend to be supremacist, I don’t realize when I am being supremacist. However, as we will see in this section, I behave as a supremacist in many moments. And the impact of these behaviors is huge: I am not just a person abusing my power over another person. I am a normative white man, supported by a supremacist society, culture and tradition, abusing my power over a person with less privileges, oppressed by a supremacist society, culture and tradition. It is the structural oppression of the world happening in the moment through me. It is very hard for me to assume I play a part in that, and my primary reaction will be to deny it.

these challenges, we withdraw, defend, cry, argue, minimize, ignore, and in other ways push back to regain our racial position and equilibrium. I term that push back white fragility.” Robin DiAngelo (2015): https://www.salon.com/2015/04/10/white_americas_racial_illiteracy_why_our_national_conversation_is_poisoned_from_the_start_partner/

So the “activist” role comes here to help the facilitator. In order to help a white normative guy to work on his supremacism, we need him to accept –even for a moment– that he is supremacist. Every “yes but...” answer is potentially reinforcing the edge to accept it. And the whole system supports that edge. More or less time a day, with greater or lesser impact, but we are sexist, racist, homophobic, transphobes, ableists, sanists... For each of the axes of oppression, there is a belief system that defines that identities on one side of that axis have “better,” “desirable,” “normal,” or “functional” qualities, while identities on the other side of the axis possess “worse”, “undesirable”, “abnormal” or “dysfunctional” qualities⁸⁵. And this division of the world operates in us even if we don’t want it to happen.

As if responding to unconscious *algorithms*, a series of *behaviors* seem to respond to these *belief systems* almost automatically –or at least that's how I experience it. Despite having been aware for some time of how many of my behaviors respond to my internalized sexism, I continue to surprise myself by behaving like that most of the days. Sometimes I’m able to figure it out for myself after it’s happened; sometimes I need feedback from someone (generally the one on whom my attitude has had an impact); sometimes I can’t see it even with that feedback; sometimes (the less) I manage to stop it as soon as I feel that the algorithm begins to operate.

Becoming aware and responsible for our behaviors is essential to stop abusing our rank and privilege, to be able to use our power in a more sustainable way that promotes a more equal world. Here is how the supremacist algorithm tends to work in me as a loop: if I believe that I am *the one who already knows* I will feel *superior* and *despise the rest*. By feeling above others, I will also feel *entitled to good things in life*, which I will try to achieve using my power and privilege. This abuse will probably result in an *addiction to the experience of power*. All these will put me in the experience of *being the center of everything*. This matches the distribution of the world around me, in which people like me are always in the center, and they are “the ones who know” –so the loop keeps and keeps going on.

These are the supremacist behaviors I want to explore in this section. They all operate by that unconscious supremacist belief system that tells me that just by being who I am, I am “more human” than those who don’t look like me.

⁸⁵ These identities and qualities and where they are placed in that axis, change depending on the culture and the moment in history –the *spirits of time* we talked about earlier. So it is important to check if the identity is still the same, and especially if its associated qualities are still the same. For example, my society is slowly changing the traditional *macho* image as the model of man, towards a more sensitive man. But that *sensitive* man is still placed as the privileged one, so male supremacism can keep operating from the identity of men. If we identify sexism just with *macho* men, we are in risk of not assuming the sexism of those more *sensitive* men.

“I already know” - Knowing and the unknown

Initially I thought of doing my final project on this topic. I think it is the main closed door to learning about our supremacy and our privileges (or at least a very big one⁸⁶). As I explained before, “knowing”, “being intelligent” or “having knowledge” has been (and continues to be) one of my main sources of psychological and contextual rank. After my low rank experiences during my early adolescence, being “the one who knows” has given me power and recognition in many moments of my life (in my relationships and groups, in activism, at the University, in Processwork community...).

“Knowing” gives me *psychological rank* because it is a skill with which I find answers and solutions to problems in my life. It also gives me *contextual rank* because even if it is the first time I talk about something, it usually “seems like I know.” It gives me influence in groups and I receive recognition for it. But all this is supported by my *social rank*: the system I live in centralizes the “wisdom” of the normative white man. We, normative white men, write the knowledge and history that is considered “true.” We study the knowledge and history that others wrote and we give or take away its validity.

When I interact, my starting position tends to be that of “I already know.” When someone tells me something new, instead of saying “ah, how interesting, I had never thought of that before!” or similar, it is easier for me to say “yes, of course, I understand” or similar (as if to say “yes, I already knew that”). From that same place I can answer any question or talk about any topic even if it is the first time I hear about it, I can question other people before myself even if they are talking about a situation about which I have less information and/or experience, and I can get into an argument to defend that I am right whatever the cost.

When analyzing the structure of a process, primary processes sometimes are defined as the “most known” experiences, and secondary processes as “the least known” experiences or “the unknown.” In my case (and I think generally in the normative white male social belief system), the most known part of myself (my long term primary process) is precisely “to know,” and the most unknown part of myself (secondary) is precisely “to not know”. I highlight this to show how closed this feedback loop can be. Another way to look at it: if my belief system says that “I *already* know everything”, when something I don't know arrives it will have very little room to enter. If the social belief system operating through me also says “I *already* know everything because I am a *white man*,” when something I don't know comes from a person who is not a white man, the input for feedback will be completely closed. “Being the one who already knows” is the maximum expression of arrogance –it is the position in which I am closed to exploring any edge, any new information coming from the outside.

⁸⁶ When I reflect and write about the topic of “knowing and not knowing,” I become more aware of my tendency to speak as if I had absolute certainty, as if I knew “the truth.” Everything I write in this project is totally questionable because of my positionality, and at the same time it is my subjective truth. The problem comes when my voice has more scope and validation just for the structural power of my social identity.

Just as “being the one who knows” is primary for me, one of my great edges is allowing myself to “not know.” Paradoxically, during my training in Processwork my greatest learning has been (and continues to be) inhabiting the *unknown* –remaining in uncertainty long enough to learn something new. For a long time I went to my supervision sessions, mentorships and study committees –all of them learning spaces– trying to demonstrate “what I already knew.” But if Processwork has goals, one of them would be to give voice to the unknown –in order to ultimately facilitate dialogue between different parts. Learn to navigate what lies beyond our identity and our consciousness. Inhabit curiosity and the “beginner’s mind.” Experience the world and its signals as if we were meeting them for the first time. Unlike the arrogance of someone who “already knows,” allowing oneself to “be someone who does not yet know” is about connecting with humility and being open to inhabit the edge. In other words, allowing myself to learn from diversity that brings new information until now unknown to me.

What might intersectional activism say about all this? That sexism, racism, colonialism, cis heteronormativity, gender binarism or ableism are forms of supremacism that centralize a single form of thought and knowledge –the worldview of the Eurocentric and normative white man. And that our social privileges allow us to continue using that worldview as an example and as a lens from which to evaluate the rest of the worldviews. Concepts like *positionality*, *mansplaining* (and *whitesplaining*, *straightsplaining*, etc.) or *epistemological extractivism* underline the importance of knowledge being expressed in the first person of experience, as well as pointing out the pattern in which our knowledge is the center, and in which we appropriate and dominate other people’s knowledge at will.

Wait... does intersectional activism say that? I think so, but I really don’t know. I’m going to try to connect with humility right now: I don’t have enough training in intersectionality to make statements like the previous one (and many others throughout this work) with such confidence. I was going to start writing about the concept of *mansplaining*, and I was looking for some reference to put as a footnote. Then I found an article⁸⁷ by Rebeca Solnit about her book *Men explain things to me* (2014). My intention was to name it as a source, and even recommend that book as reading (without explaining that I have not read it). But when reading the article I find that the author explains a situation she experienced, in which she is explaining the theme of her latest book to a powerful man. This man ends up interrupting her and telling her about another book he had read on the same subject:

So, Mr. Very Important was going on smugly about this book I should have known when Sallie interrupted him to say, “That’s her book”. Or tried to interrupt him anyway.

⁸⁷ Actually the article is the introduction to the reprint of the book:
<https://www.guernicamag.com/rebecca-solnit-men-explain-things-to-me/>

But he just continued on his way. She had to say, "That's her book" three or four times before he finally took it in. And then, as if in a nineteenth-century novel, he went ashen. That I was indeed the author of the very important book it turned out he hadn't read, just read about in the New York Times Book Review a few months earlier, so confused by the neat categories into which his world was sorted that he was stunned speechless—for a moment, before he began holding forth again. Being women, we were politely out of earshot before we started laughing, and we've never really stopped.

Thank you Rebeca Solnit for hitting me in the face with this example. Yes, I was going to do the same as the man in the example and appropriate the relevance of a book about which I have no knowledge. As a white man writing a thesis, it is easier for me to find a way to appear to know what I am saying than to recognize my ignorance and expose it. The only thing I know for sure is that I have been (and continue to be) *Mr. Very Important Man* many times, and I have received a lot of feedback like "you have no idea what you are saying, right?".

I think that this dynamic of "believing that I already know" and the edge to "not knowing" is the main obstacle to being able to answer the question of "what do I do with my privileges?" I ask the question because I don't know the answer, but then I try to answer the question without knowing so I can be again the one "who already knows." At this point I have no answers, but humility and curiosity seem to be good teachers.

"The best in the World" - Superiority complex

My parents raised me with love and affection, and I love them back. But I cannot deny that superiority and contempt flow unconsciously through their veins. Especially in connection with "knowledge," and especially in my father. The way of referring to others, especially if "they don't know enough," usually involves gestures of disapproval and condescension. It is not my intention to point out my parents' behavior, and if I bring them up now it is because I know that I have inherited part of that algorithm as part of my upbringing. That idea that "I am the most intelligent," that I am "a born leader," that I am called to "do great things," has accompanied me all my life. They never told me that I was those things because I was white or because I was a man (because that doesn't correspond to their belief system as progressive people). But as we have already seen, that supremacist message comes as part of the *culture* of educating a middle class normative white man. I constantly received the message of "you are meant to be someone important," while many women around me were told "don't stand out."

How does all this work on me? Well, mainly in two ways. One is in the form of a critic or internal pressure that tells me that "you have to be the best," and that usually achieves the opposite: since the "high dream" of my potential is unattainable, nothing I do is "good enough" (pressure becomes

critical). So I end up doing nothing and getting depressed, or taking too much time and energy to do it to those standards (to ultimately not do it and get depressed too).

The other way in which this “you are meant to be important” operates in me is as a form of unconscious validation: “you are the best just for being who you are.” This is the one that has outward abusive potential. This is the substrate from which supremacism creates marginalization and oppression in the world. This is how Layla F. Saad defines white supremacy⁸⁸:

White supremacy is a racist ideology that is based upon the belief that white people are superior in many ways to people of other races and that therefore, white people should be dominant over other races. White supremacy is not just an attitude or a way of thinking. It also extends to how systems and institutions are structured to uphold this white dominance.

The supremacist ideology is based on the unconscious belief that we are superior and therefore must dominate. Of course I don't usually "believe that I believe this" –that's why it's unconscious. It is an automatic algorithm that is conditioning my actions all the time. In my case (and I believe, in many others) it usually acts together with “I am the one who already knows.” The algorithm says something like this: if the “valid” knowledge is the one that white men like me have created, and (coincidentally!) that knowledge has been saying for centuries that white men like me are superior, I (and those like me) am superior, and those who are not like me are inferior.

This erroneous belief is the basis on which the most obvious supremacism is based, but also the “savior complex.” The best known example is the one that Teju Cole⁸⁹ defines as “*White Savior Industrial Complex*”⁹⁰, the trend of “well-intentioned” white people traveling to impoverished countries to “help” non-white people. In general, they do so without training on the historical and social reality of the place and focusing attention on themselves (the famous photographs “with black children” on Instagram). But I also experience this “savior complex” in each of the axes in which I have privileges: when some friends (women) are looking at a map and I feel that “I must help them understand it,” when a black person enters an office and I think that they might need translation, or in general, in any group, when I feel that “things are not going to work well if I am not there.” It is the same algorithm that operates in the high dream of believing that this final project will change the world for the better. There is nothing wrong with wanting to help; the problem is when that “wanting to help” is based on the unconscious belief that others “need” your help because “they don't know what you know,” because they are “not as good as you,” because they are inferior.

Even though I know that this is not true, that worldview has been established for so long that reality takes its form: the vast majority of presidents, great businessmen, filmmakers, renowned

⁸⁸ Layla F. Saad, *Me and White Supremacy* (2020), p.23

⁸⁹ https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Teju_Cole

⁹⁰ <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/03/the-white-savior-industrial-complex/254843/>

scientists, the majority of examples of power, knowledge and recognition are still white men like me. I know that this is not the case because they are better, but because they live in a world built so that we, and not others, can reach those places of power. And yet...

Yet I continue to act as if it were true. I still often speak condescendingly to women and doubt their truths and knowledge. I keep being surprised if a Roma, Black, Latino or Asian person is in a position of power or knowledge. Despite all my consciousness, my critics and my depressions, the deep belief continues to operate in me that if I am not there, things do not work so well, and that the world needs to be saved by me in some way. Also that in anything I set out to do, I could be excellent at it without too much effort, because I have an innate gift, because I am “the one who already knows” before learning, because “I was born with superior qualities.” And the next step to complement this algorithm is simple: if I am the best, the others are worse.

“I am not *not-me-phobic*, but...” - Despising the rest of the world

Supremacy puts me and those who look like me at the center and at the top. And automatically, it puts those who don't look like me below and on the margins. If I appreciate and value myself just for being who I am, I will despise and I will underestimate those who are not like me. “I'm not racist, but...,” “I know it's going to sound transphobic, but it's just...,” “what I'm saying may seem sexist, but...,” or “I have nothing against Muslims, but...” As if it were a magic spell, it seems that the “but” cancels any agency and responsibility over what is going to come next. After the “but” we can say clearly supremacist things because we have already made it clear that we are not. It is overwhelming logic.

The world would change a lot if we constructed those statements like this: “I don't want to be racist, but I am because I think this and that,” “I would like not to be homophobic, but my internalized homophobia says...,” “I am going to speak from my internalized sexism:...” The thing is that if people with social privileges were so conscious all the time, we would probably shut up before saying things that we know are supremacist. By keeping our mouths shut a little more, it might actually change the world.

Or not so much. I don't usually say phrases like the previous ones, because I know what they hide. So instead of showing what I could be hiding behind those sentences, I try to hide it better. As “I already know” about supremacy, and “I am the best in the world,” I have a huge risk of not showing my biased and “not so conscious” part of myself. Using inclusive language makes diversity visible and questions normative white men centrality, but it can also hide the supremacist beliefs and behaviors of the speaker. Trying to “speak correctly” can also be a supremacist pattern trying to “be the best.” In my biases and stereotypes (whether I express them in words or not) and in my behaviors and ways of relating, I am constantly reinforcing structural prejudices. Learning and

becoming aware about them, allows me to be more related to everyone, but trying to hide them and to say “the right thing,” can reinforce the supremacist algorithm that “knows how to speak.”

Even from my awareness of structural oppression, even in my supposed “positive” thoughts about marginalized groups, I have enormous stereotypes: I love the homosexual community because it is “full of joy and color,” I believe that “the rage and strength of Black people” (or lesbians, or Latinas) is necessary to change the world, and that “the sensitivity and connection of women with their emotions” is something that men need to learn about. “The homosexual community,” “women” or “Black people” are generalizations on which I project stereotypes. These stereotypes may sound good or positive, but they label and oversimplify millions of human beings, preventing me from seeing the real person beyond the idea I have preconceived.

I also have many “negative” and derogatory biases, purely supremacist. Even though I try to deconstruct them and I do not rationally believe in them, they continue to unconsciously operate in me. I often discover myself being alert around Roma people for fear of robbery or violence. I tend to take for granted that a homeless person will have mental health problems or that a person from financially humble origins will have less culture and cognitive abilities. The list of internalized prejudices I have about each oppressed social identity is enormous. Therefore, when I relate to these people I am not relating to them. I am relating to my projection and my prejudices. That prevents me from hearing what they really say and discovering who they really are. I build a wall of prejudice (the edge) between those people and me, a wall that reinforces the experience that “it is difficult” to relate to these people.

Once again, by relating to that which is not me or does not look like me (with my social secondary process), I build an edge to the unknown. As they are not me, “the others” know things that I don’t know, that I will never know, that I will never experience in the first person. And that reality threatens my identity of “being the one who already knows.” I cannot be “the one who already knows” if there are people other than me who know things that I don’t know. To avoid this paradox, I cling to a belief system that gives me a lot of preconceived answers, a lot of projections and prejudices that reinforce the supremacist system and my identity of being “the best in the world.” And that closes any possibility of listening and learning from what I don’t know, from the experience and the reality of the other.

“I deserve better” - Deserving/Entitlement

If I am “the one who already knows,” if I have superior qualities just because of who I am and also the others are inferior, then I deserve special treatment over the rest. Just because I am who I am, I deserve more and better, I deserve that good things happen to me, I deserve that life is favorable to me and full of pleasures. Just because I am who I am, I have the right to whatever I need or want. This is how the *supremacist entitlement* algorithm works.

Under that algorithm, I feel that I have the right to be heard, and to receive attention, care, recognition and sex from my partner. I deserve the world, the society, the state or the community to protect me, to give me economic facilities and to cover my basic needs. I deserve a placid and easy life, and therefore I do not deserve “things to be complicated,” or “bad vibes,” or accusations, or big problems. The internalized belief that “I have a right to something,” or that “the world and other people owe me something” has an overwhelming strength.

This algorithm sponsors rape culture (“I deserve to have sex, and if you don't give it to me, I'll take it”), colonialism and extractivism (“we deserve all the goods on Earth”), exploitation (“I deserve your sacrifice and effort at my service”), the tyranny of care (“I deserve that you take care of me”) and all the ways in which supremacism is expressed relationally and socially. We deserve to be the center, we deserve to be above all and we deserve to use other people and the planet as if they were our property. It is the relational algorithm of privilege, which maintains that *just because I am who I am, I deserve the advantages I enjoy over the rest of the world.*

That is why this algorithm generates so many of the reactions and altered states we will see later: when those around me and the world do not give me what “is mine by birthright,” I feel frustration, sadness, injustice, I defend myself, I attack, I abuse my power to take “what is mine”... Like a small child who is learning for the first time to deal with its frustration, if I don't get chocolate cake I will want to cry, hurt other people and demand what I want without empathizing, and thinking only of myself. The feeling of injustice possesses me and I am willing to do anything to “defend my rights” and take revenge. But since I am not a small child and I have enormous power -even if I identify with my low rank of “having lost my rights,” I have the potential to attack, to kill, to destroy the world. From this internal experience, I feel legitimized to abuse my power. This paper is about me, but I think this kind of experience is the one that is leading to a new rise of fascism in our societies as a response to feminism, LGBTQi+ or antiracist discourses becoming less marginal, setting boundaries to structural discrimination and privilege abuse, and trying to stop the colonialist, racist, and heteropatriarchal normative system and culture. When our privileges and prejudices are challenged, and we didn't even know we had them, we just feel somebody is taking something from us, like the kid with the chocolate cake. And we will try to take the cake back.

Yes, this algorithm is the one that has the potential to “empower” me as an aggressor. If I feel like I'm entitled to something, and I'm not receiving it, I feel like an injustice is being done to me. As I feel so much frustration, as I feel that “they are being unfair” to me, as I feel that I am the victim, using my power does not feel like abuse, but rather like “the only option I have left.” Since I have the right to have sex, if you don't give it to me I will feel like a victim of injustice and I will feel entitled to insist and not take your consent into account. As I have the right to facilities and well-being, I will justify buying material goods even though I am aware of the exploitation and plunder that may lie behind it. Since I have the right to feel good about myself, I will justify my reaction to any feedback or criticism you want to give me about my privileges and my use and abuse

of power. As I have the right to feel fulfilled and express myself, I will justify speaking more than the rest in the groups in which I participate. Because I have the right to feel empowered, I will justify to myself the abuses of power that I am aware of.

“High power high” - Power experience addiction

Until now I have talked more about “unconscious algorithms,” about how social and cultural belief systems operate in our behaviors without us being able to recognize it (in most cases). As I will show later talking about reactions and altered states, most of the time I am given feedback I tend to believe my inner reality that “my intention was not” to abuse my power. But when talking about “feeling entitled,” awareness of the use and abuse of power has begun to emerge, even if it was justified by an internal experience of injustice and feeling like a victim.

And although the supremacist belief system operates as an unconscious algorithm, there is always a percentage of awareness in these algorithms, especially if you are aware of the dynamics of structural oppression. Normally, after I have abused my power and had impacts on other people, there is a moment when I realize that there were “pre-warning signs” previous to the abuse. There was a moment when I perceived something, something that I felt. Like a signal that was saying “you are being a know-it-all,” or “you are being condescending,” or “you are demanding from a position of privilege.” Well, normally it is not expressed in such clear words. I usually feel it as a small doubt in my actions, in my thoughts or in my sensations.

Power is addictive, and those warning signals disappear, overwhelmed by the sensations that power gives. We have talked about how we tend to identify more with low rank because it activates survival reactions that are much more intense than those generated by high rank. But we also said that “rank is addictive.” Like a drug, power and status alter our consciousness and our behavior. This is how Julie Diamond describes it⁹¹ at the beginning of her book on power:

As we attain power, we develop an illusory sense of control. Our belief in our own ideas increases while our interest in others' feedback and emotions decreases. [...] In the embrace of high power, we feel great. The more altered we become, the better we feel. High rank and power lower our inhibitions and prime us to act. Our confidence soars as our perceptions grow more distorted. Our self-esteem rises, while our self-awareness decreases. Our capacity to feel empathy for others lessens, just as the influence we have over them increases. The more we need guidance from others, the less we want it.

When I talk a lot in meetings and get decisions made based on reflections that I have shared, I feel great. Especially if they are about social issues. The recognition of others feeds my “I already know” and my “I am best” algorithms. Tingling runs through my chest, I walk with more confidence, I

⁹¹ Julie Diamond, *Power: A User's Guide* (2016), p. 1

feel like smiling. I feel happy. The critics disappear and for a moment I feel capable of achieving whatever I want, and I also feel that people are going to support me. The arrogant part of me is raised on a throne, while the humble part of me disappears from the playing field. The experience of having power feels awesome and I want more.

Then, I forget that part of what made me feel good was that I was trying to use my power for social issues –to redistribute power through facilitation, for example. The goal for which I used the power disappears, and the means becomes the new goal, because its sensations are intoxicating, and I feel that “I deserve them.” So I continue talking and occupying time and space, aware that I am abusing my rank, but justifying myself in that “I also need to feel good, I deserve it.” Everything is about me and it feels fucking great.

“Me, selfish? Well, how about me!” - Being the center

Since I am *the one who already knows*, it is common for me to be the one who takes up the most time in group conversations. Since *I am superior and others are inferior*, sometimes I feel that without me “things don’t work well.” Because *I deserve*, I feel entitled to get what I want whenever I want. That feels great, so *I get addicted to that experience of having power* and I try to be the one in the center. And when I try facing the impact of my supremacism and my privileges it is so complicated for me... that I have to write a thesis about what happens to me with this topic.

Imagining a world of which we are not the center is a huge challenge. The “neutral” plural in my language is the masculine (and there are still those who argue that it has nothing to do with sexism). “Flesh color” crayons are the ones that resemble the color of my skin. Scientific studies and medicine have used white male bodies as an “ideal model” under which to develop their applications. Eurocentric literature, films and television (with a predominance of normative white male protagonists) continue to be the most globalized cultural reference, generating a collective image that this is “human normality.”

Although white cis heterosexual men with a normative body and economic independence are a minority at the global population level (there is no exact data, but do the math), our social and cultural centrality makes us call the rest of the identities as “minorities.” Only at the ethnic level, the population that we socially identify as “white race” do not reach 15% of the world population. From *critical race theory*, the use of the term *Global Majority*⁹² is proposed to talk about “non-white” groups and break this white-referenced image.

And since we are the reference and the model to follow, since “we know more” and “we are better,” our most common pattern to deal with the effects of our centrality (that is, everything derived from the oppression and marginalization over the rest of the world population) is to try to “integrate”

⁹² Thanks to Nontokoza Sabic for teaching me the concept: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Global_majority

these “minorities.” If we extrapolate the analysis of the structure of the process to society, our identity would be “the social primary process:” the normative white man is “what is most known” (because of this centrality), “what has agency” (because he has social power), “what we try to be” (as a model and reference) and “what we identify with” as a society. The rest of the world’s population would be our “secondary process.” And when any of these individuals try to take centrality or agency or to be part of the social identity, we find ourselves with edge reactions.

Accustomed to the centrality of the normative white man, when the focus shifts elsewhere, our identity feels threatened. I have seen many cis-heterosexual couples break up or become resentful after the birth of their child. The pregnancy and childbirth process puts the focus (or should put it) on the mother and the newborn, and the man does not know what role he should play. Suddenly our demands for sex, care, and attention are no longer met, and we begin to inhabit the “what about me?” This reaction is very similar to what happens when an oppressed group decides to organize and focus on itself. “What is this non-mixed group? They want equality but they don’t let us straight people in,” “Why do they only talk about black people? That is reverse racism,” or “We are going to have to have a Men’s Day.” Accustomed to always being the protagonists, when we are not in the center we feel uncomfortable and threatened. Our reaction could be: “Wow, it’s uncomfortable not to have attention paid to you, and they always pay attention to me without having to make an effort for it! It must be very hard to live in a world that never pays attention to you. It’s normal that they want safe spaces where we don’t invade them.” But it tends to be more like: “How exaggerated! What about me! I want what’s mine! It belongs to me for being who I am!”

When we receive feedback about the impact of our supremacy, the other person puts the focus on the impact of our behavior. The spotlight on the stage no longer illuminates only the white man, but rather illuminates the other person or both. But as if to make it clear that this spotlight can only illuminate me, my reactions become so great and uncontrollable that everything comes back to me. The focus, once again, points to me: “what is happening to me is...,” “my intention was not...,” “I am having a very bad time with what you say...,” or in the best of cases “What a shame, forgive me!” Or we react with altered states (such as fighting, fleeing, freezing, or becoming depressed) that also take centrality away from the other person’s voice and place it on how we feel. But in any case the result is that the centrality of the focus is once again (if it stopped being at some point) on the privileged identity. Layla F. Saad illustrates this in the case of white centrality:

White centering is a natural consequence of white supremacy. If you unconsciously believe you are superior, then you will unconsciously believe that your worldview is the one that is superior, normal, right, and that it deserves to be at the center. [...] Self-centering is a natural thing that we all do as individual human beings. Our egos make us see things from a self-centered view: “How is this important to me as an individual?” However, white centering is a collective ego that asks the question “how is this important to us white people?”

When the question being asked is not directed at my identity, when my answer is not important, the entire system that puts me at the center because I am “the one who knows” breaks down and my identity feels threatened. In the next two sections I will explore the reactions and altered states that arise mainly in the face of this change in centrality when we receive feedback about our privileges and supremacist use of power.

4b. Reactions to feedback

The journey towards understanding structural racism still requires people of colour to prioritise white feelings. Even if they can hear you, they're not really listening. It's like something happens to the words as they leave our mouths and reach their ears. The words hit a barrier of denial and they don't get any further.

Reni Eddo-Lodge, *Why I'm No Longer Talking to White People about Race* (2017, 2018)

In the previous section we saw how the supremacist algorithm is constructed: if I am “the one who already knows,” I am also “better” and the others are “worse,” and that is why I “have the right to” enjoy the benefits of my power, to abuse it and use it to always keep the centrality in me -which in turn feeds back into each of these beliefs and behaviors. In this section we will see how, when receiving feedback for our supremacist behaviors, these same algorithms generate defensive reactions that prevent us from changing, that perpetuate the dynamic of centralizing attention and care on us, and that also have an enormous impact and cost for the people who were giving us that feedback.

My anti-supremacist belief system says “I'm not like that, being like that is terrible.” So I am going to try to show that I am not that at all costs. I am actually going to use my entire supremacist repertoire to do it, as we will see in the following examples of reactions. These *reactions* to the feedback about my privileges (as well as the *altered states* of the next section) are really what generate the supposed double bind that we saw in section 3b. I feel that “it is impossible to do it well,” that everything is too complicated. That whatever I do, nothing works. As we will see, I am not actually dealing with the feedback and information I receive, but with my reactions to that feedback. These reactions and altered states operate as a form of defense of my privileges whenever they are questioned. Robin DiAngelo, when talking about white supremacy, describes this kind of dynamic in what she calls *white fragility*⁹³:

White fragility functions as a form of bullying; I am going to make it so miserable for you to confront me –no matter how diplomatically you try to do so– that you will simply back off,

⁹³ Robin DiAngelo, *White Fragility* (2018), p.112

give up, and never raise the issue again. White fragility keeps people of color in line and “in their place.” In this way, it is a powerful form of white racial control. Social power is not fixed; it is constantly challenged and needs to be maintained.

A clarification here: since I speak in the first person, I use my personal experiences and interactions I have had to process and explain these reactions. But I think this is also applicable to “activist feedback,” that is, to the feedback that emancipatory ideologies and struggles give us. When decolonial feminism challenges us as men or white people, many of these reactions happen in us to defend our identity and avoid taking responsibility. The supremacist algorithm operates on any information that could put our privileges at risk.

“You are overreacting” - Ignorance and tone policing

One of the first defensive reactions to feedback or to accusations is to disqualify the person making them. If you rest validity to that person, to their reaction, to their way of acting or speaking, you rest validity to their message. As a person aware of my privileges, it is difficult for my supremacism to be expressed like “you say that because you are on your period” or “you black people are very violent.” But these kinds of beliefs underlie the counter accusations that emerge in me after receiving feedback about my privileges (whether I express them out loud or not). These are expressed in many ways, but basically they have two implied messages: “it’s not that big of a deal” and “you can’t talk to me like that.”

The first message nullifies the content and totally disqualifies the other person's experience: “it’s not a big deal, you’re exaggerating.” This thinking is based on the *I already know* algorithm and is simply ignorant: I am not the other person and therefore I cannot know the impact that what I just did has on them. So it doesn’t matter what internal arguments I may give to myself or explain outwardly: the only person who has the right to validate and express their internal experience of an impact is the person who receives it.

The other message does not disqualify the content, but it does cancel it due to the form: “I understand what you are saying, but that does not justify you talking to me like that.” I understand what you’re saying, but it’s not important anymore because now we’re going to talk about how you say it to me (and the impact it has on me). We normative white men are the ones who define what tones and styles of communication are “appropriate” and which are “violent.” The calm and “rational” communication style is the correct and “non-violent” one. “Emotional” or “upset” expressions are “aggressive” or “out of control.” This is how it defines Layla F. Saad tone control in the white supremacism case⁹⁴:

⁹⁴ Layla F. Saad, *Me and White Supremacy* (2020), p.51

Tone policing is a tactic used by those who have privilege to silence those who do not by focusing on the tone of what is being said rather than the actual content. It can be policing BIPOC for using tones that are “too angry” when talking about racism or celebrating them over other BIPOC for using tones that are considered more soft, eloquent and soothing. In both cases, BIPOC are expected to cater to the white gaze—the white supremacist lens through which people with white privilege see BIPOC—and the comfort level of a person’s white fragility when talking about racism.

Understanding that when I feel that the other person is “exaggerating” it is part of the supremacist algorithm is key to being able to go beyond that first reaction. “Exaggeration” is the judgment that I make of an experience that I do not have, or of the way in which it is expressed. I need to remember that the only way to know about that experience is to hear it from the person who has it, and to do so I cannot judge the way they express it. And of course: I don’t suffer from the impact of my power, so the other person’s reaction feels exaggerated to my experience. That’s because the other person is not talking about my experience, but about their experience, which is the one suffering the impact.

So no one is attacking us? In a sense, no: in any case they are defending themselves from an attack that we have previously made. But in another sense, yes: they are attacking our supremacist identity. They are attacking the part of me that believes I can do whatever I want whenever I want without taking responsibility for the consequences. They are attacking the part of me that believes that no one can criticize me, that believes I am “the best” and that I “already know.” They are attacking the part of me that is an aggressor, and I am sensing the attack. But since *I dare not identify myself with the aggressor*, there is no one to interact with.

“I am not like that” - Desidentifying with the aggressor

Becoming aware that a problem exists is the only way to begin to face it. Becoming aware that we live in a society structured in the oppression of some identities over others (and wanting it not to be that way) is the first step to changing it. But that step can easily lead us to believe that we are “the good guys” and point out the evil outside of ourselves: “I am not racist, I don’t see colors,” “how can I have hurt you if I am a feminist?,” or “I hate those homophobes, thank goodness I have LGBT friends.” In doing so, we absolve ourselves of responsibility for our power and impact, and reinforce the benefits of our social privileges by giving ourselves another “label” in our social rank: we are men, but “deconstructed” or “sensitive;” we are white, but “allies;” we have money, but “we are social activists.” All of these identities generate new social and contextual recognition that allow us to abuse our privileges with even more impunity. This is what Tania Martínez Portugal

denounced in her investigation *Transforming imaginaries about sexist violence in the Basque Country. Narratives of women activists*⁹⁵ :

It seems that if a man has a progressive, pro-feminist political discourse and also a recognized militant career, he cannot be an abuser. This issue makes it difficult to identify the aggressor and the relationship in terms of sexist violence and can be used to discredit and delegitimize the story about violence.

Therefore, I believe that the second step is becoming aware that the supremacist belief systems that we want to overthrow are part of us and our behaviors. As the “activist” role helped us to understand at the beginning of this section, in order to work on the supremacist edge we need to recognize that by being born in this society we are potentially sexist, racist, heterosexist, ableist, aporophobic, etc. And that because I am a normative white man, I will most probably abuse my privileges –generating pain and marginalization– and perpetuate structural oppression for my benefit. Consciously or unconsciously, intentionally or not, everyday or just once in a while, but I’m going to do it. The identity of feminist, anti-racist, activist is only useful if it results in this supremacism having less and less impact. If I define myself as “anti-supremacist” and it only serves to feel better about myself and to have more social and/or relational recognition, what I am doing is colonizing and appropriating those struggles to increase my privileges even more.

If I really don’t want to do that, if I really want to do my part in the fight against oppression and to take responsibility for my power and impact in the world, the third step is to assume it as my own problem. Do not do this job from the *savior complex*, don’t do it just *for the oppressed people*, don’t do it *to be a good ally*. Do it to be *co-conspirators*, as Nontokozo Sabic taught us⁹⁶. Doing it because I don’t believe in supremacy, I want to fight against it, and I know that it lives in me and acts in my daily behaviors. Because I want my behaviors to be more congruent with the part of me that says “I am not a supremacist,” I need to change the belief system to “I don’t want to be supremacist but I know that in part I am, so I’m going to do my best to become more aware of how it operates in me and take responsibility for it.”

If there is something difficult about this job, if there is something that we really have to confront with all our strength, I think it is this: the supremacist algorithms are *always* operating on me, especially when I am trying to fight them. And the dynamics of privilege also work beyond my intention: in writing this thesis, I am appropriating a lot of study and work previously done by people with less privilege, and I will receive relational and contextual recognition for it. I will receive

⁹⁵In fact, I came to this investigation through June Fernández’s article “The politically correct abuser,” whose reading makes me shudder by reminding me of the potential abuser that I harbor, no matter how “feminist” I think I am (or even if that identity is a shield for my impunity):

https://www.eldiario.es/pikara/maltratador-politicamente-correcto_132_6138793.html

⁹⁶ Nontokozo Sabic is an internationally recognised facilitator, speaker, educator and indigenous knowledge keeper advocating for social and climate justice. As part of our Processwork community, she confronted our white supremacy firsthand, and trained us in anti-racist consciousness and action. <https://www.nontokozosabic.com/>

some necessary feedback and criticism too. But I am pretty sure that I will receive much more recognition, because I am a normative white man (and therefore I already receive more social recognition), and on top of that because I am doing something “brave” and “important.” Whether or not I manage to transform my daily abuses by doing this work, what is certain is that my privileges will continue to operate. And this unfair and abusive dynamic is what we must want to change.

When people oppressed by my privileges give me feedback about my impacts, they are doing the work for me. They are giving me information so that I can be more aware. They are giving me knowledge that I do not have so that I can learn to better use my power and to relate in ways that can be more satisfactory for everyone. As a person who wants to change the impact of my social privilege, receiving feedback from the people I impact should feel like a gift. I am being given information about the consequences of my actions, consequences for which I should take responsibility in order to repair, or at least try to prevent them from happening again.

But instead of listening, apologizing, thanking the feedback and committing to learn and do it better and better, I often feel “possessed” by a series of defensive reactions that nullify any possibility of change and learning on my part. These reactions and altered states generate many times more pain and abuse than the initial action for which I was given feedback. Furthermore, these reactions cancel any “good intentions” I had, and lock me in a circle of internal reactions that make me even more harmful than if I were not aware of my privileges. The more I learn about the topic of privilege and the more I identify as a “privileged person who is becoming aware of their impact,” the more some of these reactions grow.

I deeply believe in *a world where all worlds fit*⁹⁷. I believe that each person should be able to freely and creatively express their deepest being, and that in our relationships and communities we should accompany and balance that individual freedom with the necessary relational care and responsibility towards the planet and the rest of humanity. I like to identify with those beliefs. As I said, what is difficult for me is to identify myself with the normative white man permeated by supremacism, the one who behaves daily with unconsciousness and a lot of impact and who half the time has no idea what to do with his privileges. It is my secondary process. I don't want to be like that, I don't like it.

But I am. I am like this in many daily acts, in many attitudes, in many thoughts. It's not my intention, but I'm a supremacist. I don't want to live in a supremacist world, but I live in it. I have not chosen it, it is not my responsibility what others did before me, but it is what I do with this awareness. I can't change what I have done until now, but I can change what I do from now on. And one last time: *it's not my intention, but I'm a supremacist*. And it's no use focusing all my

⁹⁷ Adaptation of the EZLN slogan I presented on Introduction:
https://palabra.ezln.org.mx/comunicados/1996/1996_01_01_a.htm

energy on reminding myself (and others) that that's not my intention. The useful thing will be to change my actions so that they become less supremacist and more congruent with my intention.

“My intention was/wasn't...” - The supremacist intention

OK. I assume I'm sexist. Something twists inside me as I write it, but I cross the edge and I accept it. I understand that it is necessary to do so in order to change it. And I am also able to see the number of ways in which I am sexist every day. But then my partner gives me feedback about my lack of care, and instead of listening to her, many times I react as if she was committing the greatest injustice in the world. “What I was doing was just to take care of you! If I did something wrong, it wasn't my intention!” A whole series of internal reactions that take a lot of voice. So much that I no longer know what exactly she told me, and we are arguing about what is happening to me. Once again my problems and I occupy all the centrality, and a lot of other reactions and altered states appear in me.

My partner is just giving me feedback, but my answer seems more like a traumatic response. Why do I react in such a disproportionate way? Because I receive the feedback as a threat to my “good person” identity. I want to be a “good person,” I don't want to hurt people. My partner's feedback is just “I don't like when you do this.” But the message I translate is “If you do this, you are not a good person.” My first reaction, inwardly and outwardly, is usually “that was not my intention!” It is the first argument to demonstrate that “I am not like that” and that therefore my identity is safe. If my intention is “good,” then I am a “good person” and nothing the other person says has validity. Everytime I remember the hurt I have caused other people in my life, my “good person” ideal of myself gets threatened. Having “no intention” of hurting others helps me to achieve peace of mind. Or used to help me, but not anymore.

“Good intention” is also the first insurmountable wall with which I defend my supremacism and my privileges and cancel the other person's experience. Of course, I also do not “intend” to use “good intention” in this way. “It happens to me,” it is superior to me, it is the algorithm operating by itself. I notice how I twist inside every time I have to go beyond my primary intention. Why do I say my *primary intention*? Because part of what is happening is what I explained before: I identify with being a “good person,” and I do not identify with being a “supremacist.” Before me are the consequences of actions that I have committed and for which I should take responsibility. But these acts are typical of an unconscious and supremacist person. And I'm not like that. And these acts have become an abuse and have generated pain in the other person. And that was not my intention. Or was it?

From the viewpoint of Processwork and *dual awareness*, yes. Or rather: too. That is, my primary intention (that of the “good person” with whom I identify) was to take care, and my secondary intention (that of the “supremacist” with whom I do not identify) was not to take care. From this

vision, the secondary process, what I reject, is also part of my internal “diversity.” So part of the work here is to be more aware and take more agency from that part of me, so I can realize earlier when it is acting.

And what is the intention of my supremacist? Take care of only myself, and use the other person at my service. That's how it is. Recognizing this is enormously important. First of all, because the other person is feeling that abusive intention on my part, and I am denying their pain and their truth from my social rank, generating a new abuse by denying their reality. If I recognize this percentage of supremacist intent in myself, perhaps I can process it with myself, and at the very least I will be able to recognize it sooner in the interaction. When we commit abuse, the most important thing is to at least recognize it and not re-victimize the other party by denying them what they have experienced. By denying this supremacist intention, my only objective is to protect myself, to focus everything on myself, to seek care only for myself by invalidating the other. That is, by denying that my intention is supremacist, I am being a supremacist.

The second reason why it is important to recognize this supremacist intention (taking care of only myself using the other person) is because it has to do with my inabilities of self-sufficiency in care. As a normative white man I am used to the rest of the world taking care of me, and taking care of myself and taking care of others are basic skills I have underdeveloped. “Taking care” is a secondary process for the white man identity that we tend to project on the rest of humanity. To fight against my supremacy, I have to learn to take care of others and take care of myself, more and better. Do not demand or expect others to take care of you, but learn to take care of yourself and others. Caring is a social responsibility that we are not used to, that we ignore and that we burden the rest of humanity with.

I realize that in these last paragraphs I am speaking from a more activist and perhaps less process-oriented perspective. But I feel that this is now necessary to stop the supremacist algorithm tendencies. If I want to follow the intention of the activist's high dream to not abuse my privileges, to stop being a supremacist, and to learn to better care for the rest of humanity (and myself), I need to recognize first that I also have a supremacist intention operating through me. I need to be more attentive to notice when it starts to act, so I can take responsibility for myself. And also to be able to be open to feedback when I am not able to stop the supremacist intention and it has an impact on others. I need to become more aware and take more agency over my supremacist identity and intention in order to take responsibility for it. And yes, I need to be also compassionate about my “supremacist” goals, in the sense of understanding my need for care and recognition behind it. But I need to remember *how unbalanced the compassion tends to operate* in my interactions.

“Here it is difficult too” - Unbalanced compassion

Sometimes I realize that, regardless of my intention, I have abused my privileges, I have had an impact that I did not want to have and I have generated suffering, pain, anger, and/or sadness in the other person. Or I realize that this supremacist intention was operating in me, I recognize it (internally or externally) and I begin to have space to listen to what it has meant on the other side (I begin to access *Phase 3*).

Good! A ray of hope! The white man is seeing something beyond his reality... but not anymore. It lasted a moment, but “it was too hard.” As I said before, identifying myself as “a good person” is something really important to me. So recognizing that sometimes I hurt others –even sometimes intentionally!– is recognizing that I am not only a good person. I am something else. So here I am, a normative white man, used to a comfortable life and to a world that tells me that “I already know,” now facing the unknown. I am not used to being here, open to feedback, questioning my “good intentions” and the impact of my actions. I have no patterns to follow, I have no idea how to operate, and it doesn’t feel safe. So I begin to connect a lot with my fragility and emotions. I return the focus to myself and the difficulty of my experience: “it is difficult here too,” “I did it because I feel vulnerable,” “I feel that it is impossible to do it well,” “my life is not being easy,” or even “I feel oppressed too.” Once again, arguments arise that justify my actions, that exempt me from agency and responsibility, that take space away from the other person, and that centralize the need for care and attention in me.

Yes, it’s true: I have a very bad time at those moments. By recognizing that “I screwed up,” that I have done harm, that I have been unconscious, I am no longer “the one who already knows,” nor “the good person.” And I have no idea how to move there, I have no practice, I have no psychological rank. I feel bewildered, scared, lost, clumsy⁹⁸. By trying to understand and make space for the other person’s low-rank experience, I come into contact with my own low-rank experience. And I have so little practice with it, that it nullifies me and I need support. Well, no: I *feel like* it nullifies me. Because in reality what happens is that it becomes my new defense weapon, the new mechanism to receive compassion so nothing changes. The supremacist algorithm is capable of combining with the compassionate gaze to continue benefiting the privileged side.

Compassion is one of the metaskills trained in Processwork. Amy Mindell⁹⁹ defines it like this:

Process work defines compassion as nurturing, caring for, and attending to those parts of ourselves that we like and identify with while attending equally to and appreciating those parts that we do not like, that we disavow and that are far from our identity. Further, compassion involves helping all of these parts to unfold and reveal their essential nature and

⁹⁸ We will go into more depth on these types of reactions in section 4c of *Altered States*.

⁹⁹ Amy Mindell, *Metaskills: The Spiritual Art of Therapy* (1995), p. 70

meaning. [...] it is only when all of the parts of ourselves, our relationships or groups, are represented that our individual, couple or group system works wisely.

It is that “compassionate” look that allows the concept of Deep Democracy. But while sometimes the parts we like about ourselves (the primary processes) are also lacking in compassion, this metaskill is especially important for those parts of ourselves we don’t like (our secondary processes). Secondary processes are those towards which we feel the most rejection and with which we identify the least –and therefore with which we relate from prejudice and not from our own experience. We need to have the most *compassion, curiosity* and *beginner’s mind* (other essential metaskills in Processwork) in order to give them a voice and allow us to explore their reality and their message.

Bringing these concepts to the topic we are investigating, what would be those secondary processes with which to be compassionate? The experience of the oppressed person? Or the role of the supremacist? Both are secondary to me: I am not the other person and I will never be able to experience their experience of oppression firsthand, but I also do not identify with the supremacist in me. From the activist viewpoint, we should destroy the supremacist part as soon as possible. From the facilitator’s viewpoint, both are secondary experiences, both are needed in some way, and both will emerge in unconscious ways if I don’t process them. And as both are secondary, for both I will need compassion. Equally? My belief is that no.

Within my belief system and my experience, the supremacist and his actions are very secondary: I do not identify with him, I have no intention of being that way, I feel no agency in the supremacist actions I take, and it is not my intention for them to happen. But in that interaction we have to take into account the systemic level and structural oppression: the supremacism of my identity has been the primary social process for centuries and oppresses the rest of the identities. Its goal, furthermore, is to benefit me and those like me. My interaction with the other person does not happen in a vacuum, it happens within that system and that structure. It happens in a certain moment in history, with a field operated by certain *spirits of time* and certain structural oppression dynamics. Momentarily it would seem that the “compassionate” and “fair” thing to do would be to pay attention and be compassionate to my reactions and my vulnerability. But by doing so we are once again taking voice and focus from the oppressed person to give it to the privileged, and then not all voices will be present and we will not be applying Deep Democracy. Whenever someone takes the center, someone moves to the margins. If my experience and my emotions are always at the center, there will be no room for others. I need to exclude, at least temporarily, my experience, my needs, my difficulties, so that there is room for others to take center stage. But even when doing this, *shame and guilt* tend to appear to put me in the center again.

“Oh how horrible, what I have done!!!!” - Shame and guilt

Let's say that I manage to “pass the test” of prejudging the other party as *exaggerated*, of *denying that I am like that*, of defending myself in *my good intentions*, and of focusing on *how difficult my side is*, and I fully recognize the other person's feedback and the impact my actions have had. Good! Finally there is some room for the other side! Well no, there is still another mechanism to focus everything on me: shame and guilt.

Now it's not just what I did that created the original feedback. The thing is that even on top of that I started reacting and arguing, I created a conflict situation, and now I am aware of the terrible impact it has had on the other person. Now I see it clearly: I was behaving like an unconscious and aggressive white man. It was one of those moments in which it is important to accept what the “activist” role was bringing: I am also a supremacist. I have spent so much time defending myself against the accusation and trying to hold on to what a “good person” I am, that now the fall is much higher. My defense strategy was to enhance the *high dream* of my identity, and now I have suddenly fallen to the *low dream*, to be what I least want to be. And I feel guilt and shame.

Guilt and shame are terrible feelings. So terrible that I need someone to exempt me from them. And then I ask for forgiveness from the other person, I cry, I criticize myself out loud, and a lot of other expressions of vulnerability and self-hatred that, whether we like it or not, pressure the other person to console us, to forgive us, to be compassionate with us, or to feel cruel if they continue to give us feedback. Even recognizing my actions, everything remains focused on me and I continue to deny the other person the space to express their experience and to receive reparation.

I'm not going to go into deeply dissecting shame and guilt. Let's just say they are emotions that are highly permeated by social belief systems and each person's religious roots. And I do believe that they are emotions that function as regulators of social and contextual norms, for better and worse. *Shame* usually happens in reaction to an external or internal critic. We tend to feel ashamed before other people's eyes, in response to others seeing what we are like. It can function as a weapon of internalized oppression and prevent us from showing ourselves –as we are in a society that oppresses difference. But it can also function as a weapon of rebellion and limiter of abuses of power –publicly pointing out abusive and unethical behaviors. Lately, when I feel ashamed, I try to ask myself: *Who am I ashamed of?* If I feel shame in front of the patriarchal critic, such as when I cry in front of other men, I know that it is a shame to combat, an edge to process. That “shamer” is an inquisitor, a social oppressor moved by the supremacist algorithm. If I feel shame in the face of liberation struggles, such as how I feel when somebody gives me feedback about my sexist behaviour, I know that I need to take that shame seriously and become more aware of how supremacism is operating in me. That “shamer” is a social awakener, an activist ally that can help me be more congruent between my actions and my intentions.

Guilt gives us signals of repentance in the first person: “oh, shit, I hurt somebody, I would like it didn't happen!”. We usually feel guilty for what we have done. I think guilt can be a clue to responsibility. But guilt, as we saw in the section on the double bind, can depress and nullify us. Reni Eddo-Lodge describes it this way¹⁰⁰:

[...] I understand that after white people begin to get it, it's even more uncomfortable for them to think about how their whiteness has silently aided them in life. A lifetime learning to empathise with white people's stories means that I get it. But I don't want white guilt. Neither do I want to see white people wasting precious time profusely apologising rather than actively doing things. No useful movements for change have ever sprung out of fervent guilt.

Instead, get angry. Anger is useful. Use it for good. Support those in the struggle, rather than spending too much time pitying yourself.

Yes, guilt can be a moral guide of our impact in others and the world. But seeking forgiveness is only meant to relieve our guilt, not to change anything. Let's use our guilt as a guidance and change our response to it: “oh, shit, I hurt somebody, I don't want it to happen again!,” so we can begin to change the supremacist algorithms that move us to hurt other people. But let's face it: the consequences of centuries of oppression *cannot be solved in a lifetime*.

“Tell me how to solve it” - Trying to deny the consequences

Let's go one step further. I have managed to stop *shame* and *guilt* from paralyzing me or centralizing everything in me. I manage to give space to the other person and their experience again. They are expressing their pain and impact, and I want to take responsibility for my actions and see if I can make amends somehow. Then I start looking for “solutions.” The other person has not asked me for them, and yet it becomes my only objective. I need to do things that “reverse” the situation, that “give back” to the other person what my actions have taken from them. The *savior complex* returns to the scene.

I don't want to kid myself: I'm not trying to “fix it” just so the other person will be okay (which also is true, of course). The supremacist algorithm continues to operate and continues to want everything to return to normal as soon as possible. All this awareness, shame and guilt is very uncomfortable. This whole thing of just listening to the other person and having room for them can't last forever. Something in me pushes and pushes for everything to return to “normal.” And that is why I want “solutions” that undo what has happened.

That is another of the great dangers of this work: the experience of privilege wants to avoid at all costs staying in pain and its consequences (I will explain more in the section on Altered States when I talk about depression and the edge to grief and hopelessness). Power abuses generate impacts, and

¹⁰⁰ Reni Eddo-Lodge, *Why I'm no longer talking to white people about race* (2017), p.221

those impacts require time, care and grief to heal. Since in this system they do not usually have these favorable conditions, they can transform into traumas and poorly healed scars. When from the privileged side we want to “solve the problem,” we are denying the wound and pain that is still alive. Pretending that “everything will go back to the way it was before” without giving space to process the pain, only generates more pain. Our intention to “solve” distances us even further from solutions. Reni Eddo-Lodge thus answered the white question of “when do you think we will reach an endpoint?”¹⁰¹:

‘There is no end point in sight,’ I reply. ‘You can’t skip to the resolution without having the difficult, messy conversation first. We’re still in the hard bit.’

After my talk, a group of black teenagers crowd around me outside, talking excitedly. ‘I think the people who want to skip to an end point are the ones not really affected by the issues,’ says one girl. I’m impressed by her insight.

When we talk about supremacy and oppression, we are talking about centuries of abuse, marginalization, invisibility, dehumanization, and annihilation. And these are just words, which will never represent the recent history of humanity and the impact that the normative white man has had on the rest of human bodies and identities. Every time I as a normative white man abuse my privilege and power over a woman, a BIPOC person, or any other socially non-privileged identity, it is not just me. Whether I like it or not, I embody and represent centuries of abuse of others who looked like me. My social privileges come from there. My social impact comes from there too, and part of what has to be solved may take a few generations and centuries to process and heal to reach “an end point.”

Careful. Here the algorithm gets activated again: “ah, so... that’s why they overreact!,” “It’s not me, it’s the history of oppression behind me!,” or “ugh, so it’s too big and I feel unable to cope!” No, they don’t overreact. They react with the necessary forcefulness to the abuse of a normative white man sustained by the weight of society and history. Because that is what I am, and that is what I need to be aware of in my interactions. I am supported by a whole social system and history, so I have enormous power with enormous impact, and I am educated to use it as I wish without looking at the consequences it has on others.

And no, it is not my responsibility to have been born into a system that gives me that power. Nor is it my responsibility what those who looked like me have done with their power in the past. But it is my responsibility to become aware that the world works like this, that I benefit from it, that I have that power and that impact, and that if I don’t do anything with it my tendency will be to use it to my advantage and to oppress others. And yes, the normative heteropatriarchal colonialist system is something enormous and very difficult to change, which is why it is essential that those of us who benefit the most from it begin to fight it within ourselves as well. How? I don’t think there is a

¹⁰¹ Reni Eddo-Lodge (2017), *Why I’m No Longer Talking to White People About Race*, p.213

single, definitive answer to that question, but it probably has to do with listening more to the rest of humanity, and making sure we are not *interpreting and translating* what they tell us.

“But I’m doing what you asked me to do!” - Translating the feedback

Let’s say I have managed to realize that the supremacist algorithm was operating on me, I have been able to take off my virtual reality glasses, I have left aside my reactions, and I have listened to the feedback and experience of the other person. I have overcome my impulse to “want to fix” the situation, and I have connected with the pain and impact my actions have had. And I have committed to working on and changing the attitudes and behaviors that I have received feedback on.

I try to do better, and yet after a while I receive similar feedback again. Only this time there is more anger and despair in the other person. I was convinced that “I was doing it well,” and their feedback reactivated all my reactions. Because “I’m doing what you asked me to do.” Then, I begin to feel that the other person is exaggerating. I “know” I am making such an effort, I feel now “I am a better person,” I know my intention is good, and everything feels so difficult for me now... The endless cycle of supremacist and self-centering reactions is reactivated. By the time I get to the shame, it is even bigger than the last time and the desire to solve it is much more overwhelming.

The first thing that is reactivated and operating here is the idea of reaching an end, the belief that “this time we have solved it.” During all this final project, my “activist” side keeps pushing for an endpoint. I have the expectation that one day I will be no supremacist anymore, and I keep writing from there. Accepting that this work has no end is part of the job. It is great to have the highest of the horizons, an utopian dream free of supremacism, but as we already saw, it can be dangerous if it closes us to awareness about our actual internalized supremacism. We need to continue training our openness to feedback, our humility and our ability to empathize with the other side.

But we also have to remember that we will always be missing something. When the other person gives me feedback, they are transmitting *just a part of their experience* to us. A small, momentary part, expressed in words that cannot contain all of their experience. In addition, they are transmitting it to a person who has no experience in suffering structural oppression, who does not know what it is like to deal with experiences like this throughout their life, and who is also much more focused on their own suffering than on that of the other person. When after all the reactions we have seen so far, the message reaches my head, I try to retain it and integrate it to be able to transform it into useful learning, into real change. Through these steps the message of the experience will lose detail: from the person’s experience, to their words; from their words, to my brain (after going through the wall of reactions); from my brain, to my consciousness; from my consciousness, to my actions. And all this in the midst of supremacist algorithms always ready to

transform reality so that it continues to support my privileges. How can I believe that I will know how to apply feedback correctly?

Yes, I have to make every effort to understand that feedback, to remember the exact words, to check with the other person if I am being faithful to their message, to process my difficulties in integrating it, and to carry it out in the most appropriate and respectful way possible. But I have to remember that it is more than likely that I will do it wrong, and that seeking to “do it well” may be responding to the algorithm that says that “I already know” and that “I am the best.” Perhaps it is more important to remain open to feedback and learning than to insist on being “the one who does it well.” This is one of the keys of Processwork when working with people, as Arnold Mindell said: *feedback is the process student’s teacher*. What did I miss/interpret/translate when the other person gave me feedback? How is that translation part of my supremacist patterns? How I am losing agency of what is going on by telling myself “I am doing what the other person asked me to”?

4c. Altered States

I have presented the section on reactions in a linear fashion. When someone gives me feedback, the first thing I do is judge them as *overreacting*, then I *deny that I am like that* and I defend my *good intentions*. Realizing that I have still hurt, I defend myself by explaining *how “difficult” my side is*, then I feel *shame* –and by doing so I continue to focus the attention on myself. Eventually, when I manage to make space for the other side's needs, I *look for “solutions”* that deny their pain, and I try to do that by *translating the other person’s feedback* to my benefit. Of course, this does not always happen in this order, nor do all the steps always occur. These reactions appear randomly in my day-to-day life, to various situations, to external feedback, to my own readings and reflections, or suddenly and without apparent cause. Many times the reactions are not so clear to identify or to put into words, and are much more similar to what in Processwork we call an *altered state*.

Processwork and Altered States

Altered states are moments in which our state of consciousness is different from usual, and in which we partially lose the ability to *metacommunicate*. Metacommunication is the ability to explain what is happening to me (which can give us more agency over the experience): “I’m feeling a lot of anger,” “I see everything blurry,” or “I feel dizzy, I’m going to sit down.” In order to explain what is happening to me, I need to detach myself, at least partially, from my experience, and not over identify with a part of my experience. But sometimes, certain experiences seem to “take over” us and “steal” our awareness and metacommunication of what is happening to us, and with them the *agency* of the experience disappears. Temporarily we do not understand very well what is happening to us or why, and we feel unable to control and modify our actions.

Altered States are part of the human experience and therefore it is important to know them and be fluid with them. Processwork looks at *Altered and Extreme States*¹⁰² from a dimensional perspective: we all have them in some way, to a different degree. The teleological and non-pathological perspective of Processwork implies that, like any other process, an altered or extreme state is significant and carries a message that the individual and the collective need to pick up and make conscious. To do this, Processwork proposes exploring the altered state with more awareness, allowing ourselves to notice its sensory-rooted signals, and to follow the direction it points to in order to be able to experience with more agency and awareness the quality that the altered state is giving us. This can allow us to find its usefulness to relate to the trigger that causes us to enter the altered state. Other times, the work would be directly on the trigger, so we can understand and process the relationship between the primary belief system and the secondary process. It is this relationship that generates the edge at which we enter an altered state.

But why doesn't that message reach closer to consciousness? Probably because its message is precisely very secondary to our identity –so it feels threatened. Altered States usually emerge in the face of long-term edges, in the face of triggers that relive traumatic events, and/or in the face of experiences that are highly marginalized by the social environment. And these “unconscious” reactions usually provide us with more “instinctive” forms of protection against the “threat” of these secondary processes.

From a neurological point of view, my Autonomic Nervous System is prepared to respond to threats by activating or deactivating my body¹⁰³: *fight* or *flight* to escape from the threat (“activation” reactions generated by the Sympathetic Nervous System); and *freeze* and *fawn* trying to mitigate the threat (“brake” reactions generated by the Parasympathetic Nervous System). I may feel the urge to *flee* and avoid being close to the threat; maybe I feel a lot of *anger*, which could be useful to defend myself; maybe I feel *frozen* and stop feeling and moving my body, which could be useful for the threat to stop perceiving me; or I may begin to *fawn* the “threat creator” by pleasing and appeasing them. These types of reactions are “primitive” responses, survival strategies that we can see in other animals, and that seek to adapt the body's resources to ensure survival¹⁰⁴. Although these resources continue to be necessary in many cases, they also tend to be activated in relational processes in which it is not our “survival” that is at stake, but rather our identity. And in the theme of this project, my hypothesis is that it is *the threat to the survival of our supremacy and our privileges* that often activates these altered states.

¹⁰²Altered and Extreme States are the poles of a continuum between greater and lesser presence of the metacommunicator and greater and lesser duration. If the absence of metacommunication is absolute and prolonged over time, we would be facing an Extreme State; if the metacommunicator is at least partially present and/or its absence is temporary, we would speak of an Altered State.

¹⁰³ <https://www.nicabm.com/topic/trauma-responses/>

¹⁰⁴ To know more about the topic, you can read about polyvagal theory (PT) and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD): <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3108032/> and <https://www.ifm.org/news-insights/understanding-ptsd-from-a-polyvagal-perspective/>

The reactions in section 4b are described in such a way that at times they appear to be the ordinary state of consciousness, and at times an altered state. In a certain sense, the *supremacist algorithm* is our ordinary state, our habitual way of perceiving and acting. But it also seems to operate as an altered state –in which we have no awareness or agency over our actions. When I am working with my supremacy on my own, or when a person is giving me feedback about the impact of my privileges, sometimes I feel very angry and want to *fight*, sometimes I want to *run away* from the conversation and be left alone, and sometimes I *freeze* and feel like I can't do anything. At other times, I feel great sadness and cry, invaded by *hopelessness*. In many cases, I perceive these experiences as being out of my control. I do not want to inhabit them and I feel that they only “make everything more difficult.” I feel like they don't help me nor the other person, and I don't understand why they invade everything.

Below I explore these experiences further, and in section 5 I present an exercise to work with these and other altered states. The intention is to be able to be more fluid with them so as not to “feel trapped” by them and to be able to use them to support change in my supremacist patterns and reactions in my momentary relationship interactions, as well as in systemic/contextual changes needed to happen.

Flying - avoiding the edge... or gaining perspective

In a sense, the most common experience of privilege might be an altered state of escape. Or perhaps it is more common to feel a vague discomfort that we would rather not feel, so we enter into altered states that help us to avoid that discomfort. In any case, having high social privileges usually means not being aware of them. It is people without privilege who often bring us awareness of our privileges and their impact on them. Living in a world in which violence, abuse, and marginalization are part of what allows our well-being should make us constantly connected to emotions such as anger or sadness. Being in Phase 1 –enjoying life without assuming that our privilege is based on the pain of others– is an exercise in unconsciousness and avoidance. We know that the world is full of war, death, and forced migration, but we prefer to talk about the weather. This altered state is one that avoids “stopping everything” to address machismo, racism, violence, climate change and marginalization. It is what makes us choose other topics of interest and conversation: those topics are too big, too difficult, and we prefer to avoid entering into them, we prefer to stay in Phase 1.

When I'm engaged in a conversation about my privilege or the impact of some supremacist behavior I've engaged in, part of me is looking to *flee* as soon as possible. It is the same part that looks for “solutions,” or even all those other reactions that avoid listening to the other person's feedback. The information that the other person, or intersectionality, or the world and its pain, brings me is uncomfortable, hard, difficult information that confronts my privileges and my “tranquility.” And my tendency will always be to avoid it. I look at the time, I think about other

things I had to do, suddenly I feel very thirsty... Something in me would like to be anywhere but here, and I just want this to end as soon as possible.

As I explained before, Processwork invites us to enter and complete the altered states until we reach their “hidden message,” the wisdom they are trying to give us. I have worked on this altered state on several occasions –the desire to avoid the difficulty that working on these topics generates for me. I have allowed myself to go far, far away from all this consciousness and all this work. So far away that I could see the Earth as a grain of sand in the Universe, insignificant. Humanity lost importance, and with it, I lost it too. I ceased to exist as an individual, as an identity. The perspective¹⁰⁵ and feeling of detachment allowed me to disconnect from my pain, my edges, my fears, and my altered states. And then I perceived once again the reality of the Essence, the rhythm of the Universe, its cycles and balances. From there I observed my everyday self and told myself: “learn to disconnect from yourself, from your goals, from trying to achieve something with your privileges. The main thing you can achieve working with your privileges is to be less yourself, to learn to disappear from the spotlight.” Run away so far that you stop being the center of everything, and then there is room for everything else. Run away so you can achieve a more detached perspective of the bigger picture.

Fighting - defending the edge... or feeling the fire of the world

One of the primary ways in which the normative white male has historically exercised his monopoly on power and dominance over other identities is through physical, psychological, and structural violence. It is not the purpose of this work to explore the reality of the political supremacist or the explicitly violent. Since the focus is me and others like me (normative white men but “aware” of their privileges), the violence I want to focus on is not that of the fascist politician who organizes structural violence, nor that of the racist skinhead who beats migrants at night, nor that of the violent abuser who subdues his wife. The way supremacist violence emerges through me is often much more subtle and difficult to pinpoint and judge. My “domination by force” can happen in my way of occupying time and space, in the dynamics that favor my privileges, or in my prejudices towards other identities. I exercise my supremacist violence through the behaviors, conduct and reactions that we have seen so far. In many cases other people will feel that my attitudes violate them without me feeling that I am exercising violence. The social supremacy of my identity and my privileges is itself violent and dominant towards other identities. Therefore, it is not necessary for me to feel like I am “fighting” to be exercising violence.

When I feel “fighting” it is usually when I feel less powerful, when I identify with my low rank, when I feel “a victim of something foreign.” When I receive feedback for my attitudes or actions, I often feel that altered state. I had tried to run away and avoid looking at my privileges, and then

¹⁰⁵ Having a broader perspective is key to move away from our limited perception of reality and open more to feedback. In this work, I am focusing more on inner works as those I offer in section 5, but another way of gaining perspective is having allies from your social identity. Cis-men, white people, heteronormative people, we need to help each other in this work by sharing feedback and perspective, so that role doesn’t always rely on the oppressed side of the social axis.

someone came to remind me of that “little” problem I have: “you have abused your privileges.” “How exaggerated!” I react: a feeling of “injustice” invades me and I feel that I have to “defend the truth.” Something burns in my chest, my teeth and eyelids clench, something “is wrong” and “needs to be changed.”

It is the experience that I often have when I argue: the other person is accusing me of something, and I feel that an act of injustice is being committed and that I have to defend myself with my best weapons. In my case, “my best weapons” are my words and my reasoning. The other person, who was trying to make me see the impact my actions had on them, receives the attack of my arguments and escalates even more in their feedback. I don’t understand why they “talk so badly to me,” and I feel that they “force me” to raise my tone more. I end up angry or yelling but “because they have left me no other option.” I can no longer listen to the other person, I only feel tension and rage, I am angry and I feel dominated by my emotions. I hate this feeling and this makes me even more angry. Let us remember that when we come into contact with a secondary process, our belief system seeks to “protect itself” and preserve the primary identity, and we tend to enter edge experiences.

When I have been able to explore this altered state working on myself or in therapy, I have managed to reach other places. I have expressed all my hatred, my anger, the desire to win and get justice (*phase 2* of conflict), and then I have been able to see beyond. My anger usually has sadness, pain, fear underneath. My anger sometimes is actually saying: “I have no idea what I’m doing! They’ve been telling me my whole life that I have to know what I’m doing, but no one has taught me that! It’s all very difficult! I am scared!” There is usually a frustrated and tired child underneath who wants everything to be easy and pleasant and not involve great efforts or uncertainties (*phase 1*), and who only connects with his anger when the problems that he usually wants to avoid are put before him. Once I express all that anger, then I am able to recognize the problems and I stop looking for enemies. I connect with the transformative power of rage, with its essence (*phase 4*) and I tell myself: “feel the rage, feel it burn, and remember that it is the rage of a world on fire. Connect with the activist that lives in you and that wants to fight for a more just world for all, and do everything in your power to change what is wrong.” From there, I remember how supremacist patterns tend to close me to other people’s feedback, and I begin to listen again to what the other person was telling me in the first place. I begin to feel the pain I caused them (*phase 3*) and how my reactions to their feedback just made the wound deeper. This doesn’t *solve* the situation or its consequences, but at least it stops the abusive dynamic in which I was denying the other person’s truth, and allows me to actually relate with the other person and to be more open to their feedback.

I think that people with high social privileges need to work on our relationship with anger and “fighting” and thus stop unconsciously using it to dominate the world. Instead, we could begin to put it at the service of social change, whether that is working in our own privileges and supremacist patterns, or addressing others when they are misusing their rank, or facing structural discrimination in our groups and societies, or any other way of using our anger to stop power abuse. There is a lot to fight for in this world.

Freezing - stuck in the edge... or deeply detached

If instead of talking about the weather, we start looking at the reality of the world, we will see all that unfair and unnecessary pain and suffering. Turns out the world was on fire, and we were either running away and looking the other way (*flying response*), or we were at the opposite barricade and pouring more gasoline on it (*fighting response*). But if the world is on fire because of the abuse of my privileges, what can I do to change it? I begin to inhabit experiences like the *double bind* one I explained in section 3, in which I feel that if I do something I will abuse my privilege, and if I don't do anything, I will abuse my privileges too.

How are we going to change centuries of oppression? How are we going to transform the entire world? There is too much pain, too much anger, too much unconsciousness. It's too big, and I have no idea what to do. Even worse if it wasn't even me who looked at it, but rather it was a socially oppressed person who had to bring me to consciousness, fighting against all my supremacist reactions and against my altered states of flight and fight. How horrible! It's gigantic and I'm a monster! The critic starts to hammer me...

Becoming aware of reality knocks me out, and I begin to get blocked. I try to think, but my mind doesn't seem to be there anymore. The more I try to do something, the less I can move. I open my eyes wide, but I don't look anywhere. If the other person talks to me, I don't know what they are saying to me. I stop understanding anything of what is happening, I feel lost and unable to react. And the other person, society, or the world, is out there waiting for an answer, telling me to do something. And that only blocks me more. I want to say "give me time, I need to think," but the words don't even come out. I am frozen and the world continues to burn.

When I have worked on this altered state, I have remained completely frozen, immobile, without thinking or feeling. Then the flames of the world caught my clothes, and I remained motionless, and simply observed them. The fire burned me little by little, without hurting me, and transformed me. The frozen state allowed me to stop feeling and thinking to *just observe reality*: flames are flames, pain is pain. In the end I felt a deep, simple and detached understanding (a deep *phase 4* experience), and an internal willingness to follow the information that came from outside. It was somewhat similar to the experience of *flight* (in terms of detachment from my primary experience of suffering or trying to defend my truth), but in this case I lived it from within, from close up. Let myself be devoured by the flames to be fuel for change. Let the edge burn to thaw me.

Fawning - appeasing the edge... or open to all truths

Imagine I went through all my supremacist patterns, reactions, and altered states, and I am open to the other's feedback. I am listening to what the other person is telling me, and I am committed to integrating it. I am trying to connect to the humility and curiosity of the beginner's mind in Phase 3, and I want to drop my rank addiction and leave space for the other person's power and leadership. But there is still another altered state waiting for me. As I am not sure anymore about "what I know" and "my truth," as "I don't know," I am in an unknown experience where I have no patterns to follow. I want to give space to the other person's power and leadership, so I begin to "accommodate." I begin to say "yes" to everything, but not in a congruent way. I say "yes," but inside me I am not sure of anything. My body signals are of low rank, of somebody with fear of external threats. I feel the only way to deal with the situation is to leave all my needs and commitments to myself behind so I can support the other person.

I went from one end to the other, from being "the one who already knows" and not having space for the other's truth, to being "the one who knows nothing" and just following the other's truth. Of course, this doesn't work for me nor the other person. They may feel I am not being real, that I am just trying to adapt to what they are saying, but not integrating it as my own. Not only that: *appeasement behaviors* tend to denote a survival response in the face of abuse¹⁰⁶. So, even if it is not my intention, the other person may perceive me as accusing them of abusing me¹⁰⁷. I feel without personal power and self-guidance for my behaviors, losing agency and accountability for my actions. From this state, it is easy that in the next feedback I receive I will defend myself from the "but I am doing *what you asked me to do!*" reaction, or feel the *alleged double bind* experience we talked earlier about, and/or enter into the *fighting* altered state once "I can't accommodate anymore."

Working on this altered state, I tried to follow an absolute trust in the other's truth (*phase 3*). I began to say "Yes, yes, yes!" but with congruency, in all of my body. So congruent that it wasn't anymore the other's truth, but a truth shared by all humanity with which I totally agreed. I allowed myself to totally drop "my truth" and open to the world's truths, to every particle of the Universe's truth (*phase 4*). I began to listen to the truth birds were singing, I began to see truth in a cookies' package, or in the movement of the little toe of my left foot, I felt the truth of the cold air blowing. I felt an inner "yes!" that held, followed and made its own, every truth of every second. It was a fluid and *process-like* quality, in the sense that it could change with every signal and follow diversity happening in the moment, but also very certain and *state-like* in the sense of totally agreeing and supporting each of those truths. When I reconnect with this quality now, it feels like a new kind of power, the power of following and supporting every truth –not just mine. The moments where I

¹⁰⁶ See Bailey, Dugard, Smith and Porge, *Appeasement: replacing Stockholm syndrome as a definition of a survival strategy* (2023) <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC9858395/>

¹⁰⁷ *Appeasement* when we face feedback about our privilege, can be also induced by *tone policing* and *fragility* defensive reactions. We feel the other person is "too aggressive," so we avoid the content of their feedback, and we begin to put the focus on our emotional discomfort.

feel connected to this quality –not as often as I would like– I feel much easier to receive, integrate and follow other’s feedback. Not only about my privilege, but in any interaction with the world.

Depression - edge to pain, hopelessness and grief

Everyone has an entire olympic-sized pool of grief that they never allowed themselves to swim in because they are afraid they will drown in it. [...] The true drowning is above the surface, not below. The true drowning is people walking around protecting themselves from the grief, but the protection becomes the actual instrument of violence. It is in fact our trauma coping strategies that are responsible for our trauma.

Alok Vaid-Menon¹⁰⁸

Before moving on to the specific exercises and tools to work on all these behaviors, reactions and altered states, I want to finish where I started. When I began to focus on this project, I entered a period that I describe as “depressive,” stuck in that dynamic of supposed *double bind* with my inner critic. Part of that depression arose from the impossibility of “managing to change the world.” We have also seen this tendency to find “solutions” in the behaviors of “being the best,” in the reaction of “tell me how to solve it,” or in the altered state of freezing. And the experience of depression seems to be common for people working on their privilege¹⁰⁹ –or at least many I know.

In recent months, I have been exploring the edges that I, and other privileged people, have to pain, sadness, hopelessness and grief. I have been able to observe how many polarizations on this issue appear when privileged people pressure oppressed people to “be well,” to feel hope, or to “not get depressed.” We want to help them “solve” their problem, their suffering, their pain. We want to make them “feel better.” But we rarely take their side, we rarely make the effort to try to feel, at least, part of that pain and despair, and we rarely even leave them the time and the space to be there –and us to listen. And I feel that this is one of the great keys to this work.

As we saw, the experience of privilege is, in a sense, the absence of difficulty, the absence of pain. We live in a society that rewards well-being and denies discomfort. The secondary process of our society (and especially in normative white men as the model of our belief system) is hopelessness, pain, suffering. It is one of our greatest fears, and in order to avoid it, we are going to medicate it, to hide it, and to massacre its expression at any cost. We are going to build a society of supposed happiness on the pain of others, and we are going to deny a voice to that pain so that it does not break the fantasy of well-being.

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.instagram.com/reel/C6pJw9uOsse/?igsh=MWV4Ynp3OTBqcHB3Mw%3D%3D>

¹⁰⁹Study: “Woke” attitudes linked to anxiety, depression, and a lack of happiness

<https://www.psypost.org/study-woke-attitudes-linked-to-anxiety-depression-and-a-lack-of-happiness/>

The vast majority of social identities have been suffering for centuries –and still suffer– from systemic oppression and marginalization. And even if they would stop suffering from it, and we would live in an egalitarian society, that wound would not be healed overnight. But we, privileged identities, usually pretend that if the abuse stops, the pain stops. We tell black people not to scream in rage, not to throw down statues of former enslavers, because “slavery no longer exists.” We ask women what they are complaining about, as “things have already changed a lot.” It is a denial of the grieving process, in which we pretend that what happened has had no consequences in the present. And when we do that, we reopen the wound and don’t allow it to heal. It’s as if when a loved one dies, someone tells you: “Why are you crying? She has already died!” Or like if you break a bone and someone ridicules you for wearing a cast and complaining when someone leans on it: “The bone isn’t breaking anymore!”

When we address issues such as racism, sexism, homophobia, illness or climate change in groups, privileged people usually inhabit the role of hope. Hopelessness goes “against common sense.” Why would we want to voluntarily place ourselves in hopelessness? It seems like a useless place that provides no solutions. Hopelessness is felt by those who know that there are things that have been lost and will never be recovered. Hopelessness is a process of grief, of awareness of the lost. We need to inhabit hopelessness in order to feel the cost of unconsciousness and abuse. Hopelessness is something we need to go through in order to change the world for the better. But it is also an emotion that honors and in a way brings back what’s been lost by crying for its loss.

That is the reality that we do not want to assume: even if we now changed the entire world –its dynamics and power structures– and everything was fair and equitable for every person, what we have lost would not return. Even if racism ended today, the millions of people murdered by the white man would never come back to life. The torture and horror committed on colonized populations treating them as non-human, are, and will be, part of our history, and the eradicated languages, cultures and traditions will never return. The rape and submission of women to men’s desire is not a wound that will be healed just with apologies. The invisibilization, harassment and violence that LGTBiq+ people, migrants, “disabled” or “crazy” people, or any other non-normative identity have suffered for centuries cannot be healed by just using inclusive language.

At some level, privileged people will never feel the pain of social oppression. We can only empathize and try to imagine it. But that doesn’t mean we can’t try our best and at least make room for it. What’s more, if I have reached any conclusion on this path and with this project, it is that this is the little we can do from our position of privilege: leave room, move away from the center, stop being the enemy, stop putting up barriers and impediments to the other side. It feels like a huge job, but the result is just allowing other people to be. Nothing else. Allow them to feel, be and express themselves without having to deal all the time with our entire supremacist and privilege framework. And be able to recognize that there is an enormous grief that we need to go through as humanity if we want to be able to heal and reconcile. And that all the pain that we avoid from our

privileges is pain that we are, once again, leaving to others to carry –those who have been carrying it for centuries.

Now, when I feel that “it’s too difficult,” that “so much pain overwhelms me,” or that “we’re back to the same old thing again,” I remind myself that yes –it is very difficult, overwhelming, and it is still a pending work that has only just begun. Part of that work is to return again and again to connect with the pain and difficulty, to “redistribute” this work so that it does not always remain on the same side. Throughout my life, at most I will be able to stop putting myself so much in the center, to leave more space, and to be more capable of listening to the voices that have been carrying pain for centuries without being heard. And to begin to feel and process some of that grief we have in our hearts as humankind.

Of course, not everything oppressed people bring is pain. What’s more: when they do not have to deal with the entire supremacist framework, when power is shared and used to empower the other, humanity tends to flourish, to express its essence of community and mutual support, empathy, diversity and color. If we normative white men want the world to be more like that, we “just” have to stop being the center of everything, leave space and learn. Stop believing that “I have to change the world.” I think this is the greatest change I can long for in myself and others like me: to stop being protagonists, and by doing so to stop obstructing change. Then we’ll see if we can support it and even be part of it. I hope we can.

5 | Tools for working on my privileges and supremacy patterns

In this section I present some process-oriented tools to work with the patterns I explained previously. They are dynamics based on the Processwork framework and its concepts and practical applications (high dream and low dream, types of rank and power, group processes, metaskills, phases of conflict, etc.), but adapted by me to add some intersectional activist perspective. They are not specific exercises to become aware of our specific privileges, prejudices and unconscious supremacisms in each of the axes of oppression, since for this purpose there are numerous bibliographic and online resources that I invite you to search.

What I propose here is complementary to that essential work. They are dynamics to help us cope with the series of supremacist *behaviors, belief systems, reactions, and altered states* that we looked at in section 4 (and also some of the issues raised in sections 2 and 3). The intention is to help us become more aware of our supremacist algorithms, of our internal conflicts around the dynamics of oppression, of our connection to the experience of privilege and power, and thus be more open to feedback and essential learning to change our way of relating and being in the world.

An important note: these exercises might help us get out of the patterns and reactions we have seen, but they will not make them go away. This work has no end. If you feel like you want to “get to an end-point” or you find yourself defending from feedback “because you are doing all this work,” remember that the supremacist algorithm is always there waiting to defend its vision of the world and your privileges in it. I suggest you designate a notebook to do these exercises, so that you can revisit them and do them again later –or with respect to different situations or axes of privileges– and compare them.

These exercises are primarily designed to be worked individually –which is how I have tried them– but they are easily adaptable to work in pairs or small groups. And another important note: take care of yourself. Yes, it is our responsibility to work on these issues, and avoiding them is part of the dynamics of privilege. But hurting and “punishing” ourselves out of guilt is perpetuating the role of the supremacist aggressor –and it is not useful to anyone. If while working on a pattern you find yourself touching areas of marginalization, trauma or abuse, seek assistance to work with what arises. Don’t struggle by yourself.

A. The source of commitment

*As Layla F. Saad says in **Me and White Supremacy** (2020), to embark on this path we will need **our truth**, which will show us aspects of ourselves that we will not like, **our love**, which connects us and equals us with all humanity and pushes us to be better ancestors, and **our commitment**, otherwise we will abandon this work before starting it. The dynamics of privilege make this work “not worth it,” and the tendency is to avoid it. We only usually undertake it when people oppressed by our privileges confront us to do so. To take more agency in this work, I find it helpful to often reconnect with my deepest values, remember the reasons why I am doing this, and re-explore my high dream and my low dream¹¹⁰ from this path:*

REASONS: Why are you doing this work?

- Give yourself some time to connect with the values and reasons that lead you to do this work. What external reasons brought you here? With what values and deep beliefs do you connect when doing this work? Write down what comes up.
- Now realize what you are not daring to write, the reasons you do not usually say out loud. You may seek social or relational recognition, you want to be liked better, perhaps you believe that you can do things that others cannot, perhaps you do it out of fear of judgment or shame. Write down any reason that comes to mind, even if you don't fully identify with it or even if it is very uncomfortable for you. Remember that this is a work of awareness, and that what we do not like –what is secondary– is possibly what has the most potential for change. Write down what comes up.
- Write all these reasons on a list and put it at the beginning of your notebook or hang it on your wall or desk as a reminder. As you work, you may change the list and add new reasons, but try not to delete what you have already written –it can always give us awareness of parts that we do not accept as much.

HIGH DREAM: a horizon towards which to walk

- Connect with your greater hopes with the issue of privileges. Allow yourself to imagine any future scenario, no matter how utopian it may seem, that you can achieve by doing this work. Maybe you see yourself freeing yourself from prejudices and supremacist patterns, or doing something transformative with your power, or maybe you imagine yourself being part of a better world, or something else. If everything were possible, what world would you dream of?

¹¹⁰ Terms developed by Arnold and Amy Mindell in which high dreams capture “our deepest beliefs and our greatest hopes [...] they describe the world we want to create.” “When the bubble bursts, you fall into a ‘low dream’ [...] you are negatively affected by the attitude of people, by your group or by life in general. You feel depressed and sick.” Arnold Mindell *Sitting In The Fire* (1995)

- Close your eyes and “dream yourself” in that world. Imagine living in that world now. What do you see? What do you hear? How do you move and express yourself? What do you feel in your body? Give yourself time to connect with the feeling of being in that world.
- Stay connected to that sensation and that world, and from there look at yourself now, the one who is starting this work: what do you see? What do you feel? Do you have any message to give to help yourself get on that path?
- Remember that the high dream is a horizon that you will probably never reach but that helps you connect with your purpose and deepest values, to have a direction and to continue walking.

LOW DREAM: What's the worst that could happen?

- When you think about your work with your privileges and supremacisms, what fears appear? Do you fear being singled out or judged? Do you fear feeling alone and/or lost? Do you fear not being able to deal with your internal world and leaving this work? What is the worst scenario you can imagine? Allow yourself to recognize your internal fears and ghosts with these topics and write them down.
- What is true in those fears –even 1%? How do they indicate areas to work on, edges that you reject, or supremacist patterns in your personality? Take some notes.
- Get up from the chair and take the distance you need from these fears. Look at them from there. How can you work on them? Do you need help, resources, tools, allies?
- Reconnect with your future self from the high dream, with its way of being and feeling. From there, observe those fears. How would you deal with them? Do you have a message for your current self?
- Remember that low dreams help us become aware of “the shadows” of high dreams, of those parts of our internal or external reality that do not correspond to our ideals. They help us become more aware of parts of our personality that we find difficult to accept.

COMMITMENT: What is going to help me not let go of this work?

- After working on the values, the reasons, your high dream and your low dream, imagine different moments and reasons that could lead you to leave this work: lack of time or energy, other commitments, lack of support, laziness, internal or external judgments, depression... Write down the ones that you feel are most likely to happen.
- Now imagine resources that can help you overcome those obstacles. Perhaps a phrase or drawing that serves as a reminder (*internal resource*), perhaps people who inspire you or encourage you to continue (*relational resource*), perhaps a group or social activity that helps you reconnect with this work (*social resource*). Write down at least one of each.
- What are you going to do in Consensus Reality to keep these resources in mind in your daily life (*concrete actions*)?

B. Becoming aware of my power, rank and privileges

B1. Awareness of your social privileges

*For each of the axes of oppression and privilege, there is a huge amount of literature and resources that you can access to better understand the structural dynamics, your positionality, and the impact of your privileges and your unconscious supremacism on people oppressed by that specific axis. For a more general work on the experience of power from a process-oriented perspective, I recommend you get Julie Diamond's book, **Power, a user's guide** (2016), which is also a practical manual with exercises and dynamics to explore your power footprint. For the moment, I propose an exercise to become more aware of your social rank and privileges. Write down your answers, they can be useful to work on different areas with other exercises and resources:*

1. For each of the following *axes of privileges and oppression*, place yourself from 0 to 10 at present (0 being total absence of privileges and 10 maximum possible privileges): sexism, gender binarism, racism, ethnocentrism, heterosexism, transphobia, ableism, sanism, ageism, classism, cultural/educational elitism, eurocentrism... You can include more axes such as rural/urban, language, fatphobia/appearance politics, technological/digital culture...
2. If you don't quite understand any of them or are not sure where to place yourself, I invite you to look for resources and train yourself more in that area. If you feel like you are tending to hide your privileges, remember that this is work on yourself, and the only way to make any difference is to be as honest as possible.
3. Make an arithmetic average of your privileges: add the total scores and divide it by the number of axes you have considered (so the result has to be between 0 and 10).
4. Look at the number that came up. What do you feel when you observe it? What kind of thoughts come to your mind? Do critics, justifications or doubts arise?
5. Now reflect on your *experience of power* in your life. Does it correspond to the number that came out? Do you feel like you have access to all the power it seems your privileges should give you?
6. What is your experience of *psychological and spiritual rank*? Do you usually feel capable, resilient, connected to your capacity and inner power? Do you often feel a connection to something bigger than yourself, justice, nature or something spiritual? Does it change depending on the context? How do you think your social privileges have influenced this? Take some notes.
7. How do you think others perceive you? In what way can they perceive *social power* in you or be impacted by your privileges, even if you do not feel it or are not aware of it? In which axes do you think you are least aware of your impact on the world?

8. Review the axes in which you have had the highest scores. Are you clear about the privileges that each axis grants you? Which ones have you worked on the most? In which ones less? Which ones have you never worked on? What do you think it could be due to? What could you do about it?
9. Have you had a low score in any of the axes? How can that experience help you when working in other axes?
10. Is there any axis that has surprised you? Why?

B2. My internal experience of power

Power is a very complex concept, with many layers and very diverse experiences. Getting to know and understand it is a job for life. This project is focused on me and people who, like me, have an intersection of high social privileges. As we have seen, that does not mean that our internal experience is one of connection with power. That is why it is important that we take more agency over our power and social rank, to be able to use it more consciously as an ally to process our supremacisms and those around us. But we also don't have much experience with situations of social oppression and low rank. For this reason, it is also important that we explore the few we have had. Not to the purpose of identifying ourselves as oppressed, but to train our humility and empathize more with those who suffer daily oppression. Finding a balance between our high- and low-rank experiences can help us more often access a kind of "humble power" –one with the capacity for action and agency to transform the internal and external system of oppression:

Taking my high rank

1. Remember a situation or context in which you felt powerful in relation to other people. It could be anything from a large group in a public setting to a relational interaction in a more everyday setting.
2. Remember and relive the experience: Where were you? What was the atmosphere like? Who were you? What was happening? What did you do that made you feel powerful?
3. Connect with who you were at that moment: move as you moved then, speak that way, look with the same gaze, think that way. Feel the power and capacity in your body and allow it to expand and express itself through you. Explore this experience with curiosity and attention.
4. When you clearly feel that power, try to express it with a hand gesture. Make a sketch that expresses it and give it a name. How do you need this power most in your life? How can you make more room for it? How can you use it to take more agency and responsibility to work with your social privilege? Take some notes

Connecting with my low rank

5. Now remember a situation in which you felt low rank with respect to a group or other people. Maybe it was a context that made you feel insecure, or people with qualities or personalities that made you feel inferior or that you feared for some reason.
6. Remember and relive the experience: where were you? What was the atmosphere like? Who was there? What happened? What things made you feel low-ranking?
7. Connect with your experience of that moment: move as you were moving, express yourself as you did, look with that look, think that way. Feel the low rank experience in your body and feel how it shapes and moves you. Allow it to transform you and express itself through you.
8. Make a hand gesture that expresses this quality. Sketch this energy and give it a name. How does this experience help you feel more empathy for other people with lower social rank than you? How does it connect you to humility? How can you keep it more present in your interactions? Take some notes.

Training my “humble power”

9. Now place the two sketches and names in front of you –the one of high rank and the one of low rank. Try to feel one of the experiences in your body and then the other. Come in, come out, get closer, get away, experiment with curiosity the different sensations. You can also try doing each one with one hand.
10. Allow little by little a dance to develop between both energies, to combine, mix, interact and transform each other. Give it time and space for it to happen organically.
11. When you feel something new appear, express it with a hand gesture. Make a third sketch with this energy and give it a name. How do you need this new form of power in your life? How can you give it more space? How can it be helpful in your work with your social privileges? Take some notes

C. Exploring the 4 phases of conflict

*In section 2e I explained the **4 phases of conflict** that all people go through at different times. I also developed my hypothesis about how having social privilege takes us more frequently to **phase 1** (“everything is fine”), while internalized oppression can lead people without privileges to **phase 3** (“I have to understand the oppressor to cope with life”) or to challenge ourselves in **phase 2** (pointing out our abuses and standing up to them). Privileged identities can encounter oppressed identities in **phase 2** through our supremacism (marking them as “the other,” “the inferior,” “the guilty”) or by dealing with their feedback (and probably entering into the reactions we saw in section 4b). And how **phase 4**, detachment and essence, is a potential place of unity and connection, but also a possible spiritual rank tool that enhances social rank and further encourages supremacism and abusive dynamics. Being aware of what phase we are in allows us to better understand the conflict dynamics and act more specifically:*

1. Choose an axis of oppression, a situation of privilege or a conflict that you have or have had about these topics.
2. What phase do you think you are in? Maybe you feel like you are among several, but try to perceive which one is most present right now:
 - a. *Phase 1*: you are not giving much importance to this issue, you feel calm, you are comfortable. You are focused on yourself.
 - b. *Phase 2*: something is bothering you, there is a person, energy or topic x (or even some part of you or some internal critic) that is disturbing you, that makes you angry or sad. You feel like defending yourself.
 - c. *Phase 3*: you are more connected to change, to doubt and curiosity, to learning, to understanding something from the other or from the unknown. You want to understand the other side.
 - d. *Phase 4*: you feel connected to something bigger, to hope, to high dream, to community, to unity, to the Universe. You feel fluid and detached.
3. Take some notes that express the phase you are in. And depending on the phase, do the following:

Phase 1 | If you feel calm and good about yourself...

...congratulations! It's a perfect time to focus on yourself and do inner work on your relationship with your power, your rank, and your privilege. Start with A (*The source of commitment*) and from there decide which other exercises may be good for you. Or start a book or training that allows you to grow in your awareness of privileges.

Phase 2| If you feel like defending yourself...

1. ...it's probably needed in some way. Write on a piece of paper all the reasons why you feel you need to defend yourself. Connect with your anger, your fear or your sadness, and try to be precise about what makes you feel that way.
2. Now, stand up and take a moment to feel your breathing and your body. Read what you have written, connect with the emotions behind it, and express them with words, with movement and with sound. If you find it difficult, start by doing it with a hand gesture or saying a word, and then make it bigger and bigger.
3. Realize about the *edge*: where do you stop? What is it difficult for you to say or do? Is there something that wants to happen but you can't get it? When you notice it, stop, move away a couple of steps, and try to observe yourself from the outside. What do you see?
4. From that *metaposition*, imagine if you could support the part of you that is on an edge. How would you do it? How could he defend himself better?
5. Return to your edge position and try to go beyond it. Explore what it would be like to fully defend yourself –or even attack or criticize something or somebody. What are the feelings and experiences you are having deeper underneath as you defend yourself? Try going in and out, going back to the metaposition, trying different ways, until you feel something new appears, until the urge to defend yourself relaxes or feels completed.
6. What has allowed you to defend yourself better? Is it a new power or ability? Feel this new quality in your body, and express it again with movement and sound. Give it a name. How can you keep this quality in mind on a daily basis? Take some notes.
7. Now return to the metaposition, look at your side, and look at the other side (the person, inner voice or situation that was disturbing you). Has anything changed? Do you still feel the same desire to defend yourself? Do you have more curiosity, empathy or compassion for the other party?
8. If you still don't feel interested in the other side, explore whether you need to continue digging deeper into your need to defend yourself. You may need to continue doing this exercise, or you may want to seek outside support. Or maybe it is important to stay more time in Phase 2 and not rush into other phases.
9. If you feel more interest on the other side, you are organically moving to phase 3.

Phase 3| If you feel like understanding more on the other side...

1. ...take some time to “observe” it. If you come from working in Phase 2, perhaps you are clear about what was bothering you. If not, look to see what you're curious about on the

other side. Is it your internal experience? Is it the way the other talks, moves, looks? Is it something that attracts you, or something that you reject? Try to be as specific as possible. Take some notes.

2. Now choose a specific feature that catches your attention (a way of saying a word, an expression, a gesture, a posture...), and try to do it yourself. Try it until you feel that it is the experience that caught your attention or bothered you on the other side. If it's a way of speaking, modulate your tone, your volume, your rhythm, to put it that way. If it is a gesture or a way of moving, allow your body to explore until you feel it is how you perceived it.
3. Do it more. Combine sound, movement, the way you look, sensations, to enter that experience. Be careful with interpretations! Enter the experience connected to the *beginner's mind*, with curiosity and letting yourself be surprised. Allow yourself to become that experience until you perceive the world differently than usual.
4. Give yourself time to be like this. Move through space, interact with objects and shapes, allow yourself to feel the essence of being like this. What makes this way of being so different? What is the quality that makes it unique? It may help you to make a gesture that describes this quality, or give it a name or symbol.
5. How do you need to be more like that in your life? How does the world and your relationships need you to be more like that? How can you give more space in your life to this way of being? Take some notes.
6. Now focus again on the original conflict in the relationship and check if you can feel on the other side. Feel their experience, and observe yourself from here. What do you see? What do you notice? Do you have any message to give you?

Phase 4 | If you feel connected to something bigger...

1. ...let's try to make it useful for the common good! Take some time to perceive that experience. Maybe you feel it inside your body, maybe in how you see, feel or hear, maybe it is an atmosphere that surrounds everything. It can be something small and concrete, or something large that permeates everything, or both at the same time.
2. Let yourself be carried away by that experience. If you feel a movement or rhythm want to happen, follow it. If something wants to be felt or perceived more carefully inside or outside of you, do it. Imagine that you could dissolve 100% into that experience and transform into it. Follow its journey wherever it takes you, as if it were a dream, until you feel you are the experience, you are the dream. Take all the time you need.

3. Connected with that experience and the qualities that you perceive there, observe your everyday self and his work with privileges, and how he goes through the different phases of the conflict. What do you see? Do you have any message to give yourself from here?
4. How can this state of essence be helpful in continuing your work with privilege? How could you access this experience at other times if you needed it? Take some notes

D. Beginner's mind and not knowing

*Studying Processwork, the metaskill¹¹¹ that has attracted me the most (and at the same time has challenged me the most) has been the beginner's mind¹¹²: allow myself to see reality as if it were the first time I saw it. And do it focused on perception, and not on interpretations (it is different to say "I see that you smile" than to say "I see that you are happy"). Accessing this metaskill allows me to connect with **not knowing**, empty my mind for a moment of belief systems, prejudices and preconceived ideas, and to perceive "what there is," with curiosity and openness. It is the opposite of the belief system that says "I already know" and the closedness to feedback.*

1. Close your eyes for a moment and focus on your breathing. Take some time to connect with your body and your inner feelings.
2. Now imagine for a moment you are a being from another dimension or a newborn. You are in this world for the very first time. Take time to perceive your own senses as you never did before. Realize how amazing it is to just perceive. You begin to see, hear, feel, taste and smell everything for the first time.
3. Now begin to slowly pay attention to your surroundings. Allow your eyes to see colors, lights, shadows and shapes for the first time. Allow your ears to hear different tones, volumes, rhythms and pitches as it never happened before. Allow your skin to touch and feel different textures, temperatures and pressures. Use all of your curiosity to see, hear and feel everything as you never did before.
4. Take all the time you need to connect with this way of perceiving, move if you want, explore whatever takes your attention. If you realize you are having assumptions like "I already know that," or "I don't like that," drop those thoughts and allow yourself to perceive it in a new way.
5. Now realize how your body sensations and your way of moving and perceiving are different to your day to day self. Stay in connection with your inner atmosphere and try to find a way to "anchor" it, a way in which you could remember this way of perceiving and reconnect with it in other moments. You can do this by identifying a body posture, or a sensation, or a way of looking at the world, or by giving it a name.
6. Stay in connection with these quality, and allow some personal situation around privileges to appear. Maybe it was something you worked on in some other exercise, maybe a feedback that triggered your reactions or maybe something else. Just choose one, and take

¹¹¹Amy Mindell defined metaskills as the "feeling attitudes which strongly affect what happens in life as well as in therapy", stressing the importance of awareness on the term "meta": *The term "meta" implies an outside point of view from which we are able to notice what we are experiencing, which feelings are occurring in any given moment. The term "metaskills", then, refers not only to the feelings that occur while we are working, but to becoming aware of these feelings as they arise inside of us.* Amy Mindell, *Metaskills: The Spiritual Art of Therapy* (1995, p.37).

¹¹² Other examples of *metaskills* described by Amy Mindell are curiosity, compassion, humor, playfulness, recycling, detachment, creativity, non-effort... She encourages us to consciously train and use metaskills in our work as facilitators, but also in our relationships and in our inner work.

some time to perceive it from this “beginner’s mind.” Be aware of when you begin to interpret and make assumptions, and connect again with the qualities of perception you just found out.

7. Does it change anything in your interpretation or conclusions of what happened? How could your interactions change by being more connected to the beginner’s mind? How could you be more aware of this way of perceiving? Take some notes.

E. Inner Group Process¹¹³

*This exercise emulates the typical **Group Process** (or *Process Oriented Forum*) with which *Processwork* explores themes, conflicts and polarities in a collective or community context. It is a format that allows mapping and becoming aware of the different voices and experiences that make up the field of a group (especially those less visible, more marginalized or less accepted by the group's belief system and power dynamics). In section 3 I summarized how I explored this exercise at various times –you can use it as an example. If you have never participated in a group process, perhaps the proposals I make to you will seem strange. I invite you to find your own way of unfolding your inner diversity and to trust your creativity and imagination. The intention of this exercise is to gain contact and awareness of your multiple internal experiences around issues of privilege and power. You can use it as a general approach to the topic, as a mapping of work areas, or to display a specific area. These are my proposed steps to follow:*

1. **PREPARE THE ROOM:** Find a suitable time and space to work with yourself for a while. You are going to make an internal group process about your relationship with privilege –difficult voices, conflicts, and unexpected feelings may emerge. Decide on a time limit to take care of yourself.
2. **WELCOME:** Welcome your inner diversity, and remind yourself that there will be parts that really want to do the exercise, and others that feel afraid, ashamed or lazy, and that the idea is to be able to give space to all those voices. Also remember that not addressing these issues in your daily life is a privilege, and that giving them more time and space in your life is a first step to using your social rank in a more responsible way.
3. **SORTING¹¹⁴:** Think about topics, questions, internal or external debates and conflicts that you are currently experiencing around privileges and supremacisms. Write them down on post-its or pieces of paper and distribute them randomly on the ground. At the end, take a moment to check if there are any more topics that you are having trouble naming and write them down.
4. **CHOOSING THE TOPIC:** Walk through the space and read each topic, notice how you feel when reading them, and express that energy with movements and sound. Don't just express what attracts you, but also what generates rejection or fear. Once you have read them all, let yourself be called by the one with the most energy. If no topic stands out, choose one or draw lots. Remember that other topics are also important and that they need your focus too ¹¹⁵.
5. **UNFOLDING THE PROCESS:** Once the topic is chosen, invite your diverse voices to give their opinion. Let's start unfolding the internal group process, you can do it in various ways:
 - ❖ You can stand up and move around the room to express each role.

¹¹³ Exercise based on the one I developed with Raúl Rodríguez for the workshop “*Learning to swim in a sea of doubts.*”

¹¹⁴ Tracking and choosing a topic is part of the work. Sometimes the entire process takes place here. Becoming aware of how these polarities and questions inhabit us is a very important step to “owning” topics that we do not usually pay attention to.

¹¹⁵ This is just a proposal on how to choose the topic. Use your creativity to explore other ways to do it. The important thing is to become aware of how these topics awaken different sensations and reactions in the body.

- ❖ You can take objects, dolls or puppets and place them on the table or on the floor representing each role.
- ❖ You can draw or map the group process.
- ❖ You can write what is being said as a play or story.
- ❖ You can allow your creativity to propose any other way to do it.

6. POLARITIES¹¹⁶: Observe possible polarities: if you express an opinion regarding the topic, take a moment to see if there is another voice opposing or reacting to this opinion. Allow them to go deeper and establish a dialogue. Be aware of when you are being more theoretical and when more personal. If you feel you can only be in one role, you may consider doing *E.Phase 2* exercise to really express your side before trying to explore other voices.

7. TEMPORARY RESOLUTIONS: when these voices relate, observe if something changes in the internal atmosphere. Notice and write down temporary resolutions and insights, and ask yourself what has helped the feeling change.

8. GHOST ROLES¹¹⁷ AND EDGES: Ask yourself: Is something or someone missing? Am I naming something or someone that is not present or expressing itself? Is there anything that wants to be said but is difficult to be named? Try to identify it and give it space and time to express itself.

9. “CLOSING” THE PROCESS: When you feel that it is enough or the set time is up, invite the parties to say their last interventions thinking about closing. Write down or express what has happened, what diversity has been expressed, what temporary resolutions have been reached, what are the next steps to take, and what issues have arisen or remain pending for further work. Become aware of the diversity of internal sensations present in this moment¹¹⁸.

¹¹⁶ A big difference between doing an internal group process and doing it with more people is the length of time you stay in a role. Roles need time to unfold, and Phase 2 of a conflict often needs that one takes completely each side. As you move between roles to interact, you may not delve as deeply into the essence of the role as you would by participating in a group process. The goal of this exercise is more to map the field and internal conflicts, and explore the interactions and relationships between roles. To go deeper into the quality of each role, other exercises may be more useful.

¹¹⁷ If by doing this or any other exercise you take on any role associated with the oppressed part of privilege, be careful. By unfolding a “group process” with my internal polarities, I can process discussions, conflicts or unconsciousness that I would otherwise explore in relational and group contexts at the expense of people oppressed by my social rank (with the potential benefit of saving them this work that I can do by myself). At the same time, doing this process without real feedback from people who experience social oppression is insufficient and potentially dangerous, as it can lead me to believe that I understand and can interpret experiences that I have never experienced in my own body. It is not the objective of this exercise, or any other, to replace feedback and the own experience of oppressed people.

¹¹⁸ Be careful with trying to close by “solving.” In a way, group processes never end. We can only frame the place we have reached, possible resolutions and new topics that have appeared, and place us to continue going deeper later. If you feel “tempted” to make a closure “that solves the problem,” remember that it is one of the patterns of supremacism, and that you are most likely marginalizing some ghost role.

F. Explore supremacist behaviors and belief systems

*In section 4a I explained the paradox of my supremacist behaviors: despite my activist belief system being against it, supremacist algorithms operate through me in my behaviors. Since I am against these algorithms, it is difficult for me to **take agency**, recognize those behaviors as my own, and **take responsibility** for the impact of my actions. This is the first challenge on this path: recognize **my supremacist behaviors** so I can start working with them. Below I propose some exercises applicable to any axis in which you have social privileges:*

F1. Acknowledging that I am a supremacist

1. Choose any axis of oppression in which you have social privilege.
2. Start by writing down the reasons why you are against supremacy on this axis: “I am against machismo/racism/classism/lgbtqi+phobia/etc because...” In what way are you not a supremacist?
3. Read the list of reasons and connect with the emotions it generates in you. Express those emotions of your *anti-supremacist self* with movement, words and sound until you feel it has been fully expressed. Celebrate having these beliefs and the intention to be this way.
4. Now remember that supremacist algorithms operate through you whether you want it or not: In what ways are you a supremacist in this axis? In what ways do you feel superior or have supremacist thoughts? In what ways do you behave as if you were superior or treat people oppressed by this axis as inferior? “I behave in a sexist/racist/classist/lgbtqi+phobic/etc way when...” Take some notes.
5. Realize the sensations and emotions that it generates in you to recognize that, at least in part, you are a supremacist. If your anti-supremacist identity still resists acknowledging that you are also a supremacist, remind him that this is an essential step in fighting your abuse of social rank.
6. Take notes on any learning you have had and possible ways of keeping working on them.

F2. Working on supremacist algorithms

Once you have recognized that, at least in part, you are a supremacist, it is a little easier to work with the algorithms and behaviors that this generates. Next we will go through the list of algorithms that I described in section 4a. Maybe you don't recognize yourself in everyone, maybe you have others. You can apply them on a single privilege axis, or at the intersection of several:

- ❖ **“I already know”**- Notice how you interact with the world as if you had nothing to learn. When a non-privileged identity gives you information or feedback, when you prejudge someone just because of who they are, when you think you already know about an experience you have never had or will ever have... What are you missing? What areas can

you not have first-person knowledge about due to your positionality? How does supremacism prevent you from opening yourself to “not knowing” and learning?

**To keep working on this algorithm... Try exercises D and C (phase 3). Read and listen to the experiences and knowledge of oppressed people and remember that you will always have something more to learn.*

- ❖ **“The best in the world”**- Realize how you think you are better just because of your privileged social identity. How does this algorithm work through you? In what way do you feel superior just for being male/white/cis/straight...? In what ways do you sometimes feel like you can “save” the world or other people?

**If you find yourself in this pattern... It may be a good time to work on the balance between your power and your humility. You can try exercise B2 and F1.*

- ❖ **“I am not *not-me-phobic*, but...”**- If you hear yourself saying things like “it’s going to sound racist/sexist/transphobic but...,” or you see yourself having prejudices (“positive” or “negative”) towards other social identities, it’s time to have a face-to-face conversation with your supremacist. These beliefs and comments are very harmful, they perpetuate oppression and marginalization, dividing the world into humans and non-humans.

**You can do exercises C or E to face it... allow your supremacist to fully express his prejudices and the experiences and beliefs that shape them, and then take the activist and/or the oppressed side. You need to recognize that these beliefs exist within you, and to process them with yourself (or with people with the same privileges as you in this area) so that they have the minimum possible impact on oppressed people. If you lack arguments against the supremacist, you need to train yourself more in feminism, anti-racism, lgbtqi+ culture, etc.*

- ❖ **“I deserve better”**- Make a list of situations in which you feel that you “deserve” affection, sex, care, attention, goods, comfort, facilities, recognition, etc. How do these sensations influence your relational conflicts? How do your privileges influence those feelings? What is the supremacist algorithm saying? What can you answer from the awareness of privileges? Remember that this algorithm is the one that usually justifies aggression and abuse by making us believe that we are victims of injustice.

**You can work on your entitlement in two ways... On the one hand, making a list of “personal needs,” realizing which ones you are not taking responsibility for and are waiting for other people or the world to meet, and deciding what you are going to do to learn to take care of yourself without abusing your privileges. On the other hand,*

processing the emotional dimension and potential reactivity that this algorithm generates with exercises such as C, E, G, and H.

- ❖ **“High power high”**- Remember a situation in which you felt “addicted” to your power. How did your social privileges influence this dynamic? At what point did you stop using your power for the greater good and start using it in an addictive way? Relive the situation and notice the first signs that were warning you. How can you be more attentive to these signs? What could you do the next time it happens?

**To work on your addiction to power... you can do exercises B1 and B2, or get Julie Diamond's book, Power, A User's Guide (2016)*

- ❖ **“Me, selfish? Well, how about me?”**- Notice moments when it is difficult for you to “not be the center.” The focus is on other people, or other identities, and something in you wants (and gets) the attention to return to you. Go for a moment beyond your justifications and arguments, and realize how this is true: once again, the focus is on you. How do supremacist algorithms push you to feel this way? What impact do you think this has on other people? How can you remind yourself that you need to be less in the center?

**To work on your occupation of time and space... realize that your privileges have always put you in the center –and others in the margins–, and that you need to train non-centrality and get used to it. Any exercise on detachment, humility, curiosity and listening to the other side can be good for you. Look for books, movies, series, and podcasts in which the centrality is not that of your privileged identity and notice the emotions and reactions that arise.*

G. What can I do with my reactions?

In section 4b we saw how when receiving feedback for my algorithms and supremacist behaviors, a series of reactions tend to happen. These reactions prevent me from listening openly and validating the feedback. They put the focus back on me and also represent enormous wear and tear on the other side –sometimes having more impact than the initial reason for the feedback. Being aware and recognizing the supremacist algorithms operating in our behavior can help us ensure that this is not the case. But we also need to process how those algorithms operate in each of these reactions.

1. Remember some *feedback* you had about your social privilege (or where your social identity was part of the feedback), and to which you had a *reaction* (at the time or later). What do you remember? How was the interaction? What reactions did you have (external or internal)? Try to remember everything you can and write it down.
2. Next, review the list of reactions below (those I presented in section 4b) and see if they are similar to the ones you had. Decide which one or ones you want to work on now.
3. Almost all of these reactions have to do with defending my side and not having room for the other's experience. You can work on them with **exercise C, D and E**. I also suggest some specific approaches with each of the reactions:
 - ❖ **“You are overreacting” - Ignorance and tone policing:** If you judged the way the other person expressed themselves, or the magnitude of their experience, try taking their side completely, and connecting with the impact of historical and social oppression. From there, watch how you perpetuate that history of oppression with your actions, until you can empathize with the other person's experience and their emotions.
 - ❖ **“I am not like that”- Disidentifying with the aggressor:** If you get stuck in recognizing that you may have supremacist behaviors, perhaps you need to take your side more –to have more space later. With some of the proposed exercises, try to go deeper into the part of you that is against supremacism, until you feel space to recognize how you are like that too. Afterwards it may be a good time to do **exercise A** again.
 - ❖ **“My intención wasn't” - The supremacist intention:** If you are able to recognize that you have had an impact on the other person, but that leads you to want to defend yourself based on that it was not your intention, it may be important for you to recognize the intention of your inner supremacist. What 1% of yourself did intend to do what you did? Imagine for a moment that you are totally that 1%. What do you want? What are you trying to achieve? Try to include this part in the Internal Group Process (E) or working with the phases (C) and interact with it -or else it will be up to others to do it for you.

- ❖ **“Here is difficult too” - Unbalanced compassion:** if instead of taking responsibility from the impact and then supporting the other side, you find yourself pitying yourself because of how difficult your experience is, you need to train your resilience to be more responsible. Yes, all of this work is difficult, but it is tremendously unfair that your difficulty takes center stage right now while ignoring the other person's. It is time to connect with your inner power, take your rank, postpone attention to your difficulty (you will work on it with yourself) and make room for the other side. You can work on your humble power and the algorithm of your centrality.

- ❖ **“Oh how horrible, what I have done!!!!” - Shame and guilt:** If shame or guilt are leading you to altered states and not allowing you to have space for the other person, you need to transform them into strength to take responsibility. Perhaps there is an inner critic operating and generating an alleged *double bind* like the one I described in section 3b. Process your relationship with the critic with exercises C or E. Work on addressing your supremacism (F) so you become more open to recognize it, and so that that shame transforms into something like: “shit, I did it again! So I know it is time to stop focusing on me and to give space to the other side.” Power exercises (B) and altered state exercises (H) may also be useful.

- ❖ **“Tell me how to solve it” - Trying to deny the consequences:** If you recognize everything that has happened but feel pressured to find a way out, perhaps you are forgetting that this is something huge and that there are no magic solutions. And that if you try to escape the consequences, you are leaving the other side alone again. Trying to connect with the impact and sensations of the other side is key. Exercises *A* and *I* can also help connect with the magnitude of the topic we are dealing with.

- ❖ **“But I’m doing what you asked me to do!” - Translating the feedback:** If you are trying to apply the feedback you received, but you react when you receive new feedback, consider that believing “I am doing it right” is part of the supremacist belief system. Are you sure you are doing what the other person asked you to do, or are you doing something conditioned by your algorithms? Do you remember exactly what the other person said? Did you check if you understood them correctly? It’s a good time to train your *beginner’s mind* and your *humble power*.

H. Taking agency of my Altered States

*In section 4c I explained how **altered states** are experiences in which our state of consciousness is different from the usual one, and where we lose the ability to **metacommunicate** (partially detach ourselves from the experience in order to explain it) and the **agency** (ability to act consciously and voluntarily) of our acts. Processwork helps us recover that agency by trying to find the **useful message**, the quality or direction that this altered state is trying to give us.*

As we confront the issue of our social privileges and our supremacisms we touch many personal edges, and that can make us enter altered states –especially when we receive feedback from other people. Below I propose an exercise that may be useful to relate better to your altered states¹¹⁹, regain agency and perhaps find in them a useful message for your work with your privileges:

1. Remember a situation in which you entered an altered state in relation to your social privileges or supremacisms. Maybe it was while you argued with someone who was trying to give you feedback, perhaps it was reading, writing or watching some content on these topics, or any other situation. Maybe you felt like your perception was altered, or you had trouble thinking and communicating, or you felt very strong emotions that you couldn't control. Or you froze, or felt like running away. If several situations come up, write them down and for now choose only one.
2. Identify what “the threat¹²⁰” was: was it how the other person spoke to you? Was it specific information? Was it an accusation toward you? Try to be as specific as you can. Give it a name and write it down.
3. Now try to identify what kind of altered state you entered:
 - a. **Flying:** any state that disconnects you from the situation, that makes you “leave” in any way from the interaction. It could be a physical urge to leave, or a feeling of dissociation, but it could also be your attention wandering to something else, or feeling dizzy or unable to listen.
 - b. **Fighting:** any state that pushes you to attack or to defend yourself. An internal sensation of wanting to “beat” the other person, either dialectically and speaking, or with physical sensations of wanting to fight. Feelings of anger, injustice, frustration...
 - c. **Freezing:** any state in which you feel paralyzed, unable to speak, move, to think or make decisions, perhaps even to feel. Feelings of inability and helplessness.

¹¹⁹ To work on grief and depression, I propose a specific exercise below.

¹²⁰ Another way would be to work in becoming “the threat,” for example with phase 3 exercise. Remember that the “threat” can be a signal in the other person that just triggers some kind of trauma response in you. It may have nothing to do with the other person's intention, but with your life history, belief systems, or communication styles.

- d. **Fawning:** any state in which you feel that you want to please, but not as a conscious and responsible act in which you are integrating the information, but as a way of trying to stop the feedback. You feel fear and uncertainty, and a feeling of having to say “yes” to everything even if you don't understand it so that “the storm subsides.”
4. As you remember, reconnect with the bodily experience you had. Remember how you saw, heard and perceived your surroundings. Remember how your body and skin felt, and the emotions that ran through you. Take the position you had at that moment, and try to relive the experience you had as faithfully as possible.
5. At that moment you probably wanted to get out of this state. Now we are going to try to get to know it more, enter into it trusting that it can provide us with something useful. Keep reconnecting with the experience and allow yourself to be 100% in that state. Express it more, make it bigger:
 - a. **Flying:** go as far as you need, physically or in your imagination -you can use the whole Universe. Take as much distance as necessary until you feel you are at the right distance.
 - b. **Fighting:** connect with your anger, feel it in your body, feel how it moves you and allow it to express itself through you. Say what you have to say, shout, or move to fully express that energy. If your body is not enough, imagine any superpower to do it.
 - c. **Freezing:** gradually allow yourself to freeze completely, become totally still and silent, until even your mind, your breathing and your heart become still. Shapeshift into something that is totally steady.
 - d. **Fawning:** feel your ability to support, to say yes, as a power, as a capacity. Become a figure or character that is always available to follow, support and complete an important mission.
6. Once you feel 100% in that experience, perceive what quality, message or direction it brings you –that you normally don't have. What makes it so special?
7. Connected with this quality, look from here at “the threat” that challenged you and led you to that altered state. How do you relate to it from here, from this experience? How can this quality help yourself relate more fluidly and openly? How can you work and integrate these learnings into your daily life? Take some notes.

I. A global grief

*I closed section 4 by talking about **depression** and our edge as a society to pain, hopelessness and **grieving**. And how I think that edge shapes a large part of the conflict between privileged and oppressed people: from privilege we tend to want oppressed people “not to suffer,” but by denying their pain –not by recognizing it, taking responsibility, feeling into it, and processing it together. I believe that the desire to deny this great grief that we as Humanity suffer is behind much of the supremacist dynamics. And I think a big part of the work is learning to process that grief.*

*Processwork Open Forums often explore social and global issues. **Hopelessness** is often a role we go through in these processes, and it brings us essential information to continue transforming the world and ourselves. Other methodologies, such as The Work that Reconnects¹²¹ by Joanna Macy¹²², propose collective dynamics such as The Ritual of Despair¹²³ to explore and communally transform this grief. Traditionally, all cultures around the world have had a series of community rituals to process grief, loss and transformation. I propose that you investigate and reflect on your own relationship with grief, and that of your family, your community and your culture. For now, here I propose an exercise to do part of this work on an individual level (or accompanied by a trusted person or group if you don't feel capable of doing it alone):*

1. Think about a global situation of social oppression that causes you a lot of anger, pain and/or sadness. Choose something of the world that does not affect very close people, and try to be specific (instead of machismo, choose something like “chemical submission rape,” instead of wars, “the invasion of Gaza,” instead of racism, “the people murdered on the borders of southern Europe,” etc.).
2. Now, notice the part of you that would like to “fix” this situation. What does it say? What would you like to happen? How do you imagine the world without that pain? Validate and honor that high dream and that part of yourself. Take some notes.
3. Now, connect with the pain that the situation generates in you. Imagine, to the extent possible, that you are a person affected by that oppression. What is your day-to-day experience like? How do you see the world? How do you see the history of humanity? How does all that make you feel?
4. You need time to feel all that pain. Notice how part of you wants to run away, and tell it that now is not its time, that right now you need to process this. Allow yourself to cry, scream, express anger or frustration, but don't get carried away looking for solutions and relief. Remember that there are impacts and losses that can no longer be solved. Find a place in you that can make room for that reality.

¹²¹ “The Work That Reconnects helps people discover and experience their innate connections with each other and the self-healing powers of the web of life, transforming despair and overwhelm into inspired, collaborative action.” – Joanna Macy <https://workthatreconnects.org/what-is-the-work-that-reconnects/>

¹²² Joanna Rogers Macy is an environmental activist, author, and scholar of Buddhism, general systems theory, and deep ecology. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joanna_Macy

¹²³ <https://workthatreconnects.org/resources/despair-ritual/>

5. Allow yourself to linger in grief and/or hopelessness for a while. How do you feel it in yourself? How is your body and your posture in connection to hopelessness? How do you look, move and breathe? Make a hand gesture that expresses the energy you feel right now. Give it a name and take some notes or sketch that defines it.
6. Now think about some of the feedback situations that you worked on in other exercises. Think about an argument or altered state you entered into when raising the topic of your privilege with another person. How does being more connected to hopelessness or grief help you better understand their feedback? How do you see yourself from here?
7. Now reflect on your work with your social privileges and supremacisms. How can you make more space in your life for these experiences? How can you integrate this hopelessness and grief with your desire for transformation and change? How can you help others like you connect with this global grief? Take some notes

Extra. A home on Earth¹²⁴

If at any point doing this work feels too difficult, take a break. Yes, taking a break from this work is a privilege, and it is important to remember that people on the other side of the axis do not get to choose when they take a break from the system of oppression. But neither feeling like a martyr nor burning yourself out are useful results of this work. Rest, take care of yourself, meet your needs, gain distance and perspective. Then remember the reasons why you were doing this and the source of the commitment, your high and low dreams. And as soon as you can, get back to work, there is a lot to do.

If at any time doing this work feels too difficult, perhaps this exercise will help you:

1. Find a space that is as comfortable and safe as possible to spend a few minutes.
2. Observe your breath, without forcing it. Simply observe it and allow it to calm down and become deeper. Allow your eyelids to relax and close or open.
3. Little by little, pay attention to your body. If you find it difficult, touch it with your hands and feel the contact. Take time to feel your body and its various sensations.
4. Now remember or imagine a place on Earth (or in the Universe) where you feel at home, where everything is fine, where everything is calm. It can be a place you already know, or one you've never been to, or one you imagine and invent for yourself right now. Trust and allow yourself to choose one, even if it is not the one you would expect.
5. What is that place like? Observe its landscape, its shapes, its colors, the elements that make it up. What is its light like?
6. Now allow yourself to be in that place. Feel the temperature, the sensation of the air on your skin. Feel the ground holding you. Listen to its sounds and its silences. Feel its atmosphere. Observe its landscape, its colors and its shapes, and allow yourself to be just another part of that landscape. Breathe into the landscape and allow the landscape to breathe into you.
7. Try to perceive the quality that makes this landscape unique, what makes you feel at home. Feel it inside your body, allow it to inhabit you.
8. Make space inside your body for this place on Earth, a place you can return to whenever you want. Where in your body do you feel that home?
9. Connected with this quality and this place, observe your everyday self in the distance. What do you see? Do you have a message (verbal or non-verbal) to give him? How can you give more space in your daily life to the quality that you have found in this place?
10. Remember that you can return to this place whenever you need to.

¹²⁴ Exercise based on the one I developed with Raul Rodríguez for the workshop *Learning to swim in a sea of doubts* (2022), and based in turn on exercises by Arnold Mindell.

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