

New Dimensions in
Body Psychotherapy



Edited by Nick Totton

11 The body in Process Work

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Introduction

Process Work, or Process-Oriented Psychology, is a wide-spectrum approach to working with people's experience and perception of life's flow. At its origin is Arnold Mindell, originally a physicist and Jungian analyst. In a recent interview, he described how in his early years as an analyst he became interested in 'getting out of his chair' – getting up from the chronic sitting position, and moving more deeply into body experience (Mudie 2004).

Getting out of the chair

I saw Arnold Mindell for the first time in the mid-1970s at his lecture on Carlos Castaneda's writings about the teachings of the Man of Knowledge, Don Juan, and their relevance for dream and bodywork (Mindell 1993: viii). I'd been seeking ideas and ways to explore the relationship between dreams, body symptoms and illness for a while. I had worked for seven years with a Jungian analyst in Zurich on my dreams. When I finished that work, I read a lot of psychology, attended some bodywork seminars and found myself dissatisfied by it, because I missed the Jungian scope. When my girlfriend of the time told me I might be interested in listening to a Jungian analyst talk about the body, I jumped at the chance to attend the next lecture. Crowded in a large lecture room with 200 people, I remember listening to Arnold Mindell recounting a story of how a marathon runner had come to him complaining of getting completely stiff in his hips within ten minutes of running. A doctor had sent him to Mindell because nothing else had worked and if seeing Mindell might not be helpful, it certainly would not be harmful. I remember being delighted when hearing Mindell recount how he had invited the client to put on his running shoes and go running with him along the lake. I remember being thrilled at the idea that a Jungian analyst would move from his chair and run

with his client. I listened to the details of the story – how they ran for a couple of minutes, how the stiffness of the client's hips came up, how Mindell then asked him to make movements that made the stiffness a tiny bit worse (a process called 'amplification'), and how the runner then exclaimed that he could not, because if he did that he would walk a 'certain way'. Mindell's client had just stated his 'edge' or belief system that limited him and simultaneously structured his identity.

Here also was my first encounter with the fact that symptoms have a social context. The runner could not walk a certain way because he considered that kind of walk 'womanly'. Asked what he understood by 'womanly', he said, 'feelings, emotions and crying', unaware of the poverty of the male image he was trying to live up to, unaware that he was willing to marginalize his own feelings, emotions and impulses to cry and be warm-hearted – and unaware that this attitude supports sexism and homophobia and perpetuates the privileges of patriarchy. Mindell might have been aware of all of this, but he chose at the time to ask him to walk like a woman, talk and behave like one and he (Mindell) would now voice the criticism exactly as the runner had just done. At this point the runner started to understand his dilemma. This was the mid-1970s and men with feelings were 'news' – men who were willing to do 'women's work' and share responsibility at home were still an oddity, and conflicts concerning old values were arising in people's awareness. Mindell would make the collective aspect of such issues a more central part of his focus ten years later in his World Work approach to social issues and conflict resolution (Mindell 1995: 66). That day, it seemed, he talked about feelings and being a man with his client. It helped the client.

I was hooked and phoned Mindell for an appointment the next morning. Over the next 27 years I became one of several co-founders and trainers of the Research Society for Process Oriented Psychology, Zurich, and later the Process Work Centre of Portland, Oregon. I'm also a co-founder of RSPOP UK, the Research Society for Process Oriented Psychology, the umbrella organization for the Process Work training programme in the UK. I'm also on the faculty of several other Process Work training programmes across Europe and internationally.

In the three decades since, Arnold Mindell has deepened and widened Process Work's theory and application extensively, working with dreams, perceptual awareness in proprioception (body sensation), movement, auditory, visual, symptoms and illness and their relevance in relationships and group life, coma, extreme states associated with mental health disorders, creativity, inner work, relationships, groupwork, organizational development and community conflict resolution (or World Work) with social and political issues.

The dreaming body

Process Work consistently focuses on the body to gain contact with the wisdom of nature and the creative process that is emerging through body signals and symptoms. No matter the application of Process Work, it always includes awareness of the body's signals. Process Work also includes working directly with body symptoms and illness as one of its applications.

The body is a teacher to live life fully. It teaches you to differentiate your perception and your ability to welcome the creative part of yourself that often first manifests as a disturbance, a symptom, an illness, a weird body feeling (Mindell 1998). Rather than trying to get rid of a symptom or seeing it as a sign of something gone wrong, Process Work's orientation and methods consider symptoms to carry essential information. When this information is unfolded, it makes you feel you have dipped into the creative process. You discover specific patterns meaningful to you, your situation in life, or a project or relationship that you are entangled in.

One reason to focus on the body is that it carries information that is not structured by our intentions and will. Rather, dreaming patterns structure body signals and symptoms. When Mindell began exploring body symptoms, he used methods of amplification to discover the body's message. Time and again, he discovered that the experience in the body mirrored the person's night-time dreams. He coined the term 'dreambody' to refer to the patterns that express themselves both in our body and in our dream images.

Mindell tells an early story about a man with a tumour. He asked the man to feel the tumour more. He did so and said, 'I feel as though I could explode.' Then he said he had dreamed of fireworks exploding on Independence Day. The 'explosion' in the tumour was in essence his medicine, or the direction of his personal development. The man then went on to metaphorically 'explode' with feelings that had been bottled up for years.

Process Work is an awareness method. Its methods do not impose a change of behaviour or attitude from the outside, but rather the methods facilitate noticing what is occurring and unfold it according to the feedback from all parts. A basic idea is that the client's body signals how to work with them. Awareness itself is transformative. Feedback is considered the ethical regulator of process work, because it is the whole process that has the wisdom for the individual's process. The feedback comes from the client's intended and unintended communication and, similarly, the facilitator's. While as facilitator, I will focus on the client's unintended signals as well as on the content of their intentions, I will also notice the feedback of the interaction between us. If, for example, a client comes with a headache to work on, and leaves happy without a headache, and I mysteriously have a headache afterwards, then the overall feedback is to be looked at together with the client.

The roots of process work

- *Jung's analytic psychology.* The original interest of Mindell had been the teleological approach of Carl Gustav Jung, the creator of the analytical psychology movement in Zurich. Rather than asking where dreams *came from* in the client's personal history, Jung asked where dreams were *leading*. The dream carried patterns guiding the person's individuation or becoming their whole self. Mindell, a Jungian at the time, realized that if dreams carried meaningful patterns for the person's evolution, so must symptoms. He narrates in his first book, *Dreambody: the Body's Role in Revealing the Self*, how he was advised in his dream to focus on the same alchemical God Mercury that Jung had used to understand the meaningfulness of dreams. This would help him to understand the mercurial nature of symptoms and the body, the potential of symptoms to transform and change. In later years, Mindell would name the Process Work school a daughter of Jung's analytical approach to the unconscious.
- *Physics.* With its theoretical framework, its phenomenological and empirical tools of observation, its demand for accuracy of observation, its demand for the reproduction of the experiment leading to results and hence its 'teachability', Mindell's physics background influenced his ceaseless reframing of his findings, his persistent curiosity, questioning and research into the mystery and wonders of the human condition (Mindell 2000: 13). We train from the perspective that a hypothesis is to be named, applied, tested and rejected if the feedback and the observation do not validate it. In fact, a principal method of Process Work is to follow the feedback of the client's intended and the client's unintended signals.
- *Taoism.* The 'Tao that can't be said' reflects the idea of ever-flowing processes and the interconnectedness of events. The 'Tao that can't be said' from a process perspective is considered a sentient preverbal feeling experience that transcends duality. Following the Tao and in Process Work, we attempt to accurately follow and unfold the mysteries of nature, even when they are apparently disturbing or negative (Mindell 1989: 90).
- *Shamanic tradition.* Process Work training reflects shamanic traditions. Process Work methods involve facilitating and consciously entering into altered states and bringing back information useful to an individual or a community. It is basic to the training of the process worker to enter their *own* altered states and learn to explore them as the future of their creative life. It is about training to enter the unknown and discover the process on its own terms, from within the so-called

altered state, rather than to remain outside of it and interpret the experience. People tend to name an experience as disturbing or fascinating and never enter the experience itself. In Process Work, we focus on entering an experience and unfolding it rather than interpreting it.

- *Alchemy*. Alchemy was the process of cooking the *prima materia* to transform it into gold. Jung studied alchemy. He describes the process of cooking and transformation of the psyche. Mindell expanded upon the Jungian techniques of 'amplification', such as active imagination and dream interpretation, by adding methods for working directly with nonverbal, body-level experience (Mindell 1989: 118).

Growing from these roots

Building upon these sources, Mindell developed a theoretical and practical framework for encouraging clients to consciously inhabit a previously unconscious experience and to 'unfold' the process. This unfolding process is a deconstruction of the client's named experiences (their first interpretation of experience), that relies not only on verbal material and imagery but also on movement, deep somatic experience, interpersonal relationship and social context. Process Work theory emerges from Mindell believing in unravelling and living the message and task of the dreamworld, as Jung has modelled to many and as have countless 'healers' or 'shamans' before them.

With his Jungian and physics orientation, Mindell first explored working with the body's dreaming, and explored processes of illness and of dying people, including work with comatose states. He differentiated short-term processes reflected in night-time dreams, and body symptoms and long-term processes reflected in childhood dreams and collective or archetypal material found in deeper levels of body experience. He also explored working with people with extreme states using psychiatric diagnosis. Mindell observed how the dreaming body appeared in communication signals that influenced relationships, and went on to study and formulate a theory of 'systems with awareness' that he called the 'global dreambody' (Mindell 1998: 104–5). The inclusion of awareness and hence conscious change differentiates this concept from the other systems theories. Mindell applied this concept in his studies and work with large groups dealing with social and political issues and explored these and other ideas of Process Work in relation to the creative process. He and his students and colleagues continue to explore the application of Process Work in organizational development, conflict resolution, theatre and the arts.

Mindell and his colleagues consistently re-evaluate the theory and its application. When I once asked him about how it was that he was always

able to continue developing the theory, he told me that it was a natural process, like going out in the bay with a boat to enjoy the day – but, if the boat was leaking, he'd go back to the dock and either fix it or take a new one, before going back to enjoy the bay again.

In essence, the Process Work facilitator needs and seeks to constantly grow from their own holes of perception. This attitude has a lineage in the shaman's practice to take himself apart to find out what plagues the client, or in Jung's dedication to consistently reinventing his theory to fit his client's needs and psyche rather than condemn the client for being 'resistant'. While it is natural to say that the individual client or group is resistant, or the symptom or conflict is intractable, it is more interesting to recognize that the facilitator's awareness or skills need expansion. That expansion will happen when the facilitator focuses on their growing edge. This occurs not only in supervision or therapy, but in moment-to-moment inner work while facilitating.

Chasing an antelope

I have profited in the last 30 years from regularly working with my somatic experiences, my symptoms and dreams, several chronic symptoms and some illnesses. I still always find myself searching anew for my path.

Unfolding my symptoms has always made me aware of the limits of my belief systems that have been part of my youth and culture. I acquired these systems, as all of us do, through familial and cultural socialization. I also developed belief systems to support me to give me more privileges, power or rank within the social context I was growing up in. I did not notice when these patterns had become redundant and my growth demanded of me to separate myself from them and start exploring the flow of unfamiliar processes. When young, I was not taught to meet the unexpected, step into the unknown or grow by interacting with and learning from difficulties, or from my dreams, intuition, impulses and moods. On the contrary, I was taught, as countless of us are, to focus solely on achieving socialization – at school, at home, within my culture.

I had lots of exposure to unpredictable events, but no philosophy to profit from them consciously. I was unconsciously encouraged to identify with the background I came from, which was lowest in the echelon, even among the working class. Don't overstretch, recognize your limits, and recognize what you can't do and implicitly, where you do not belong. We know today no one belongs, few of us fit the mould that parents and cultural norms prepare for us. Few of us fit the mould we construct for ourselves.

What Mindell researched and formulated in the dreambody concept is that what does not fit our mould or concept of our identity, and what we therefore marginalize, appears nonetheless in signals in our channels of perception and

expression: visual, auditory, proprioception and movement (Mindell 1989:11). In his present work, Mindell also emphasizes how these experiences first manifest in pre-signals which can be picked up in fleeting signals, tendencies or 'flirts' (Mindell 2000: 215).

Marginalizing does not imply bad faith from us. It means that we do not have patterns to do differently. Many indigenous cultures have or have had a different relationship to the dreaming level. Take the Aboriginal culture of Australia. Their cultural inheritance includes a belief that the outer world we live in comes from the world of dreams, and that we are constantly shaped by the world of dreams. Dreaming is the foundation of life, and this corresponds to the importance of following the subtle impulses of the body and signals of the environment. This notion is a far cry from the modern western causal and mechanistic explanations of life, and the belief among many that dreams are irrational or irrelevant. In the western world, we tend to be suspicious of experiences which are 'only subjective' and try to hold ourselves accountable to 'consensus reality': those things we feel are 'objective', that we can agree upon.

I recently saw a film on an African indigenous groups' way of living and hunting. The documentary depicted the hunting day of a warrior, who was in pursuit of an antelope, how he ran after her for six hours, how the antelope rested in some shrubs, and then left. The warrior arrived at the shrubs, studied the ground carefully and found absolutely no further tracks. He proceeded to immerse himself in 'being the antelope', acting like her, moving like we had seen her some hours before on the hidden camera. Trusting his perceptions as the antelope, he left the shrubs and started running, in the same direction we had seen the antelope run. Sometime later, he found her tracks again and came upon the exhausted antelope. He had identified with the spirit of the antelope, rather than fight it, became it and so was one with what he was seeking. Consequently, he deeply thanked both her and her spirit for the food she and her spirit were granting his family and him for the months to come.

In a nutshell, this illustrates the theory of Process Work. Rather than fighting the body and its symptom(s), the idea is to enter its spirit, become it, be it, act like it, live it, because you are 'it' beyond your usual identity, and assume responsibility for the advantages 'it' gives you.

Body symptoms and signals indicate the method of working with them. A variety of methods for working with body experiences fall under the category of 'amplification', which we have mentioned. It is an extension of Jung's method of working with dreams. While Jung asked for an association to the dream image, a process worker will ask the person to feel the symptom *more*. One's personal subjective experience of any symptom is unique and therefore relevant to understanding its meaning for the individual. No interpretation can replace the subjective experience.

Identity and edges

Take the story of a young woman who asks me about the pain in her shoulder. She is a graduate student in the field of economics, and also prides herself in her studies and knowledge of psychology. She is from South America, trilingual, living and studying in Europe.

I ask her to feel the pain and to adjust her posture or make a movement to make it a tiny bit worse, so that she can feel it better and perceive her experience more specifically. She lifts her shoulder a bit, grins and tells me, 'Oh yes, I know about that, I tend to be too pushy, too aggressive.' And she drops her shoulder.

Although many people think that symptoms are meaningless, others rapidly assign 'meaning' to the symptom, as a sign that something is wrong and needs correction. For example, 'My symptom is telling me I have too much stress, and I need to slow down.' This sort of 'meaning' reflects an underlying orientation that symptoms are disturbances that need to be removed. The symptom is not yet fully grappled with and understood on its own terms.

I noticed that the woman with her shoulder pains had reacted quickly with her belief system, that she should be less pushy and more relaxed. But we had not yet explored the experience of her shoulder, and what 'it' wanted and what it was like. I asked her to lift her shoulder again, to feel the symptom, while I touched her shoulder with my hand. I asked her to find out what her shoulder felt like doing. She agreed. I put my hand lightly on her lifted shoulder, and I sensed a slight push upwards against my fingers. I pressed back, and her reaction was way stronger – she pushed back with her shoulder. Soon, she was pushing with her shoulder against my outstretched arm and laughing. I asked her how she had enjoyed the interaction. Apparently she had enjoyed her strength a whole lot, yet she said she was 'too feisty, too aggressive', and that people were constantly telling her she should be more relaxed and open, and always advised her to cool down.

So I asked her to step into the role of these people, these critics or gatekeepers reflecting the internalized belief system. She now pushed down on my shoulder, and said, 'You are too feisty, too emotional, cool down!' I kept pushing relentlessly against her pressure and request to be calm. She laughed and relaxed in her posture, rejoicing in how energizing it felt to her to see me expressing and enjoying the energy that was in her symptom.

I anchored the work by then putting my hand against her shoulder and she started immediately to push against my pressure, this time refusing to heed my requests to cool down. She said she now realized how she'd been giving up her own excitement and drive at her university, believing people when they said she should be calmer. She realized she wanted to live her passion, her tendency to have strong points of view and to tussle with people.

We also spoke about the cultural aspects of her process. As a South American living in Europe, she often felt unwelcome, not only in her personal style but in her cultural style. She decided she would voice her perceptions and engage at her leisure with the uncomfortable discussions that were bound to arise.

Edges and awareness

This young woman felt disturbed by a shoulder pain. She identified as needing to be more open and relaxed. Without being conscious of it, she was in agreement with an internalized critic towards her own exuberance, that was thus marginalized. The exuberance remained in her shoulder. As with many physical symptoms, her shoulder pain reflected two parts or attitudes in conflict with each other. One part called for her to cool down. The other part didn't want to cool down, but wanted to push through with exuberance and excitement. The symptom occurs at the 'edge': a term used in process work to describe the belief system that defines the limit to our identity or who we think we should be. The 'critic' defined the edge or belief system: that it is better to be cool and calm, and that one ought not be too pushy. In this work, she becomes aware of her experience in proprioception and movement, the urge to push and the verbal dictate that she should be calmer. She becomes aware of how these processes are in conflict inside her. Rather than feeling stuck between the two, she starts to enjoy her feistier, exuberant nature. This in turn relaxes her! Both sides of the process are now more accessible.

Edges, collective processes and change

The woman suffered from feeling slighted by her friends and teachers, who said she was too rebellious, pushy or temperamental. But all this is not very conscious. It occurs just outside her conscious perception. She is attempting to fit into the culture where she lives and studies, and unwittingly sides against her own exuberance, which resurfaces in her symptom.

Edges, or belief systems, stem from personal, family, cultural, social and religious norms and values. These define how we identify, and what we marginalize. The woman with the shoulder pain voiced an internalized value of the dominant culture of Europe which criticized and marginalized her exuberance. As she also identified her exuberance as belonging to her culture of origin, the edge was enforcing a kind of internalized oppression and prejudice against her as a member of a minority culture. The symptom thus carries extremely valuable information. Just trying to remove symptoms has far-reaching implications for our personal and social development.

Edges and rank

Emphasis on the importance of social awareness of privilege and rank is an important milestone in the evolution of Process Work theory. The dynamics of social rank are also relevant to body experience and symptoms. Unconscious use of power and privilege is oppressive and creates symptoms and illness. Power and privilege, and the associated rank are also easily misused to enforce prejudice. They tend to appear as double signals.

I recall a client who complained of headaches and stomachaches and pressure that had been ongoing for a few weeks. She told me she was going to change her job and that she was happy about it. I said I was happy to hear that, but noticed pauses and a slowness in her voice that were not congruent with the message of happiness. She paused and then told me the following story. She'd been working for many years at her current job, in a social organization. She was loved and respected by many people in the organization, due to her innovative ideas, commitment and hard work. She had recently come up for a review, in order to renew her contract. While having a tea break in the cafeteria, two senior managers whom she vaguely knew came up to her, asking questions about her work, but implicitly challenging her training and qualifications. After a while, she realized that she was feeling intimidated, and asked them to state their purpose in questioning her in this way. They stopped and left her table. She then told her boss about this incident, and asked him if it had to do with her review, and if there was any question in the organization as to her skills and qualifications. The boss refused to answer, saying he would give her the evaluation in a week. The boss then went on holiday, without leaving word about the evaluation and contract renewal. There had been rumours that changes were under way in the organization and people would be made redundant, but she had never been told or considered that this could involve her job. She now realized that the rumours probably involved her, and so she was looking for work elsewhere.

I described my perception to her regarding the misuse of rank and the tactics of intimidation employed by the senior managers and her boss, whether intended or not. In relation to the hierarchy in the organization, they had rank over her and had misused it (Mindell 1995: 49). She felt witnessed and validated in her perception. I then helped her to become aware of how she had not let herself get intimidated, how she had reacted with presence of mind in the cafeteria, and when approaching her boss to find out what was going on. I pointed out that she had a 'psychological' rank, in her ability to stay emotionally centred within a conflict, and able to communicate directly. This psychological rank was sorely missing in her boss and managers. I suggested that it might be useful to her to recognize this rank and act with this rank in relation to her boss and managers.

She asked to pause for a moment and then said that she realized I was right, that she tended to ignore her own presence and abilities to handle difficult situations, and in this way left the action and accountability for the situation she was in with others, which furthered her feeling of intimidation. She decided on the spot that rather than just leaving, she would first go back and clear up the whole situation and request clarification of the managers' actions. She also said with surprise and delight that all the symptoms she'd had in the last weeks since the incident had disappeared during the session.

She shifted identity by first recognizing the signals that she suffered from, rather than enduring them. In this way, she more clearly recognized the misuse of power by her boss and managers. She then also became aware of her own rank in this situation – her ability to demand that the managers and her boss be accountable for their actions.

Edges and double signals

The edge structures our communication in double signal. The double signal consists of an intended signal and an unintended signal. The intended signal originates from our primary process (i.e. how we identify and what we intend to communicate). The unintended signal arises from our secondary process, the 'dreaming' process we do not identify with. In between is the edge, the belief system that organizes how we identify and what we marginalize. Another way to look at this is that a double or unintended signal that 'you' don't send is sent by a dream figure.

With the dreambody concept Mindell suggests that the dream pattern is not only reflected in a symptom, but is also mirrored in the double signal. The 'dreaming' is occurring at all times. At night, it appears in our dreams. It also appears in our body experience and symptoms, our unintended communication and in our relationship patterns and entanglements. We can access the 'dreaming' at any moment by unravelling a double signal. To illustrate this: a client of mine tells me that he is feeling afraid of talking to his wife and father about their demands on him. He wants to learn to be more assertive. While he tells me this story, he unconsciously touches his lips. I ask him to notice the feeling he gets while lightly stroking his lips and then to inhibit himself (another method of amplification), to stop the stroking and to notice what he misses. He does this and tells me that he misses the feeling of tenderness that stroking his lips gives him. As we explore this a bit, he tells me his dream. In it, he pushes down earth with his fingers around the bulbs of the tulips he has planted. In the dream, he realizes the tulips need more earth around their bases and stems so that they can stand up straight. For him to stand up straight (to discover the assertiveness he was looking for) did not mean that he needed to be tougher, but rather that he needed more earth (i.e. more support to his

tenderness). He easily saw the connection between his dream, double signal and relationship.

Principles of process work

Almost nothing principle

The most subtle signals carry the seeds of transformative life-changing experiences. These subtle signals self-amplify until they reach our awareness. This means we have the opportunity to work with many symptoms and body experiences long before they become overtly disturbing. This in turn means that you focus on the minimal signals and cues you have been trained to ignore, bring them to foreground and, by inhabiting them, bring to the middle what is usually marginalized.

Deep democracy principle

Deep democracy refers to the inner wisdom and direction that arises when we support the interaction of all parts of our experience and all dimensions – the concerns of everyday life, the dreaming that structures our symptoms, night-time dreams and unintended signals, and the subtlest levels of experience.

Eldership and facilitation

Elders – not necessarily age-related – are no longer attached to one particular point of view dominating the other. Rather, an attitude of eldership supports the interaction of all parts. Jung described the individuation process as a shift in the locus of awareness from the ego as the centre of personality to the self as the centre of personality.

Similarly, in Process Work, we focus on developing fluidity to welcome and facilitate an interaction among all parts and the resulting transformation, rather than impose one part over another. Thus its premise lies in *awareness* and *facilitation*. This is very relevant to working with the body. People generally side with one part over the other or attempt to impose one part over the other. For example, relaxing is valued over tension. This marginalizes tension and its potential for the person who might need tension to finish a project, for example.

One classic example from Mindell's early work is the story of one of his occasional seminar participants who, attending a seminar on bodywork offered by a visiting teacher, was made aware by the seminar leader that his protuberant jaw muscles needed relaxing. The seminar leader demonstrated his technique with the assent of the participant, releasing the tension in these muscles. Mindell saw this young man shortly after. His mouth was slack, and

he felt heavily depressed. Mindell asked the client to consult the I Ching with him about how to go further. He got Hexagram 16 – biting through. The young man's process that appeared in his jaw was to bite through – to 'bite through the problems in his life' with all his focus and intensity, and not to relax (Mindell 1989: 25–6).

Metaskills

Metaskills refer to the attitude with which the tools and skills of Process Work are used. Attitude affects process work, just as the attitude when you cook affects your food, or the attitude when you pick up a pen affects your calligraphy. There are attitudes that are recommended as useful when applying skills of process work, such as beginner's mind, interest in the unknown and the ability to be compassionate to all parts. Another approach is to become aware of the attitude you *do* have, to name it and facilitate it as part of the whole interaction with the client (Mindell 1995).

The tendency in most of us when working with people is to unconsciously identify with a certain attitude, such as friendliness, criticism, mothering or optimism. When you unconsciously do that, you and your client get polarized. You might be optimistic rather than facilitating your client's awareness between their optimism and their depression or pessimism.

Perception of our metaskills makes such skills work. Another way of saying this is: *not* noticing your attitude as you apply a skill makes you fall into the process with your client.

Personal myth and pilot wave

Process Work's teleological orientation (i.e. focusing on the evolution, meaning and direction of processes), perceives life's creative process in the body, its signals, symptoms and illnesses as an expression of the individual's myth. Jung defined the individual myth as a long-term orientation in life. Its pattern is mirrored in the childhood dream. While researching the connection between dream and body, we studied the interaction between childhood dreams as long-term patterns and chronic symptoms as somatic long-term patterns. Process Work in recent years has reformulated the personal myth idea in dynamic terms and borrowed the concept of the 'pilot wave' from quantum physicist David Bohm. The 'pilot wave', the 'flux behind all events' is the sum of all dream-figures across your lifetime (Arnold Mindell 2004: 69–70, 84). It gives you the sense that your life has direction.

Three dimensions: CR, dreaming and sentience

We've seen how body experience, symptoms and unintended signals arise from the dreaming process and shape our long-term individuation. Body symptoms and double signals reflect the conflict and the complementarities of parts to parts. Working with the relationship of parts leads to transformation, a creativity that arises out of their interaction and often an experience that transcends the duality. Amy Mindell used to refer to this as reaching an irreducible core experience. At this point, there is a momentary resolution, a sense of discovery and meaningfulness that transcends siding with one part or the other.

In recent years, Arnold Mindell has focused on working with pre-signals and tendencies originating from what he calls the 'sentient level of experience'. This is the level before a signal becomes repetitive and precedes the polarization of parts and roles. While we used to unfold signals and the interaction of all parts of the process to its irreducible core, we now also focus on accessing these core experiences through fine-tuned awareness of subtle pre-signals before they become signals and symptoms.

Alternatively, with special methods that begin with attention to a somatic experience, symptom or signal, it is possible to discover and connect to the underlying impulse at the origin of the signal or somatic experience.

Mindell describes three dimensions:

- 1 *Consensus reality* refers to ordinary reality. Experiences are consented upon or 'objective', repeatable and measurable. They can be captured on a video or measured, and most people will agree they exist.
- 2 *Dreamland or dreaming level* refers to the level of double signals, dreams, subjective experiences of the body, deeper feelings, mythic polarizations, dream images and visions.
- 3 *Sentience or essence level* is the area of subtle tendencies before something manifests as a dream image or an identifiable feeling, or a specific or repeatable signal.

A specific category of pre-signals are fleeting signals, sensations, visual or auditory flirts, moods and hunches. These fleeting signals manifest at the margins of our perception in the various channels. They arise from the sentience level and seek our attention. These flirt-like experiences are of such brief duration that we normally do not hold onto them long enough for them to come into our consciousness (Amy Mindell 2004: 60–5).

Mindell describes the sentient level as a creative field from which our dreaming and consensus realities arise. The creative process is central to Process Work theory and practice. Bringing awareness to the existence of this field

is creative in itself. Mindell formulates methods to move fluidly between these levels of experience. By returning to his earlier interest in physics, his interest in psychology and formulating the relationship between the two disciplines, he has deepened his first concept of the dreambody and his attempt at unifying the gap between mind and body.

Conclusion: awareness, healing and creativity

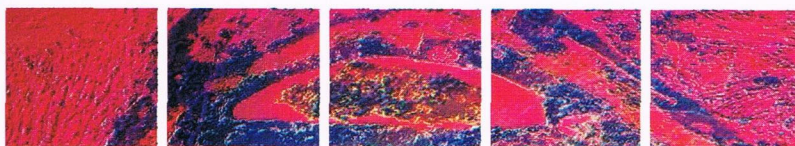
The idea of Process Work is to go where our perception is called by the dreaming and somatic experience. For example, when working with comatose people or terminally ill people, we follow and support their subjective experiences/dreaming within their altered states (Mindell 1994). The idea of healing as 'making the symptom or illness go away' is worthwhile, but not necessarily possible or relevant to the wholeness of the person. Working with people with terminal illness makes the process worker perceive that people may begin to identify with their eternal self, with a quality that is beyond time and space, feeling in that space more alive than ever, even while their body may be dying.

This attitude of welcoming and unfolding the subjective experience of the symptom is an important contribution of Process Work. It is of course natural and important to have empathy for that part of a person who is suffering and just wants the symptom to go away and get better. What is less often seen is the importance of also supporting the symptom to be experienced and unfolded – to enter it and discover its potential creativity. It is a kind of paradox that an attitude that sides against the symptom, in hopes of health, tends to try to remove it rather than discover its creative information. This 'healing attitude' thus keeps the person locked within a limiting identity, and away from the spirit that seeks personal growth and contribution to community. Because the information in the symptom still tries to express itself, this attitude can also inadvertently exacerbate the symptom.

An alternative usage of the term 'healing' refers to wholeness. Arnold Mindell writes: 'I predict that focusing on and appreciating subjective body experience as a fundamental reality will have remarkable and positive effects upon health issues' (Mindell 2004: 270).



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