

The Dark Side of the Moon

Trauma Transformation and Facilitator Development

by

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Abstract

This paper explores and discusses the importance of trauma transformation in the context of process-oriented conflict facilitator development. The core questions it tries to answer are: Why is it important for a facilitator to know and transform his or her own history of abuse and trauma, what are the benefits of such a transformation process, and what does it take to go through such a process? To answer these questions, the author gives a synopsis of several scientific approaches to trauma and trauma recovery, on this basis introduces a process-oriented approach to trauma and trauma recovery, gives tentative answers to the questions asked above, and fleshes the theory out with case material from her own practice. The core hypothesis of the paper is that facilitating intra- and interpersonal conflict and working through one's own history of abuse and trauma could be cross-fertilizing processes, provided (a) they are both informed by a process-oriented theoretical framework that goes beyond seeing the person at the receiving end of a traumatic experience only as victim, but relies on the inner resources of the person that are potentially transformative, and (b) they are accompanied by a process-oriented inner work practice that raises and trains awareness of the inner oppression stemming from experienced trauma, and for how the many facets of this inner oppression shape our way of engaging in conflict.

Key words: Trauma, trauma transformation, facilitator development, conflict facilitation, worldwork, inner work

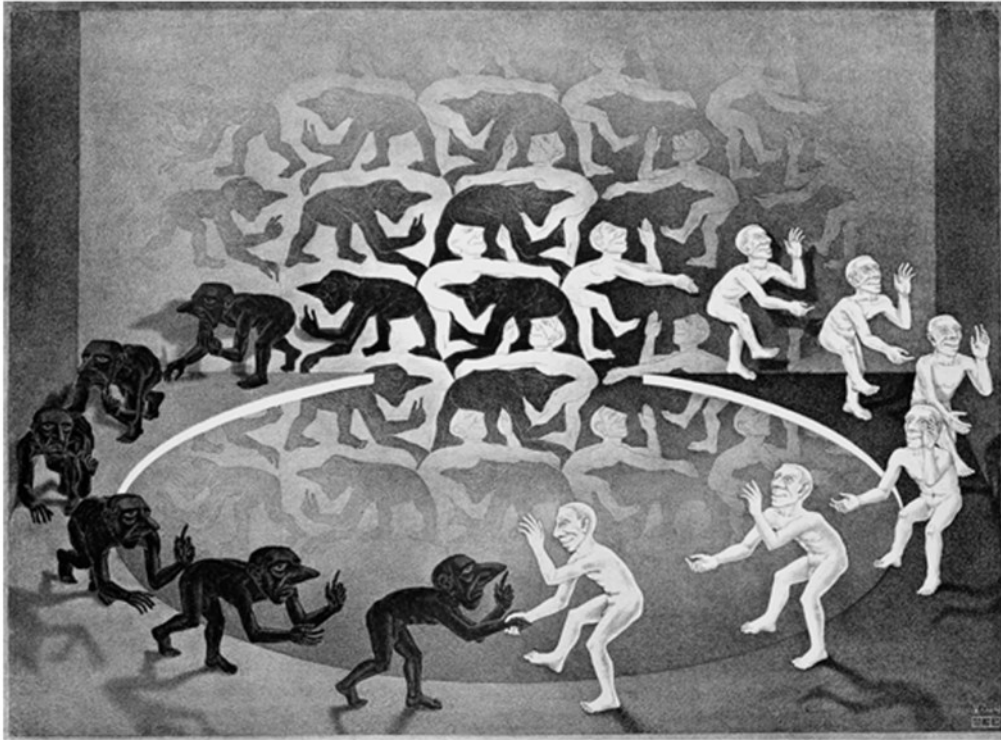


Figure 1. M. C. Escher, *Encounter* (retrieved from Ernst, 1986).

She said: What is history?
And he said: History is an angel being blown
Backwards into the future

He said: History is a pile of debris
And the angel wants to go back and fix things
To repair the things that have been broken

But there is a storm blowing from paradise
And the storm keeps blowing the angel
Backwards into the future

And this storm, this storm
is called pro-gress

Laurie Anderson (1998)

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Last but not least, I bow to the inventor of process-oriented psychology, Arnold Mindell, for having brought revolutionary and visionary ideas and concepts into the fields of psychology, conflict facilitation, and organization development. The concepts I talk about in this paper were life changing for me.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

This paper investigates the process of trauma transformation in the context of process-oriented conflict facilitator development. In *Sitting in the Fire*, Arnold Mindell (1995) stresses the importance of knowing about your own abuse history and working through this history as a facilitator. My own leadership development through the MACFOC program has been exactly this. In the last 2 ½ years I have been and still am in a process of acknowledging and transforming my own trauma history of severe neglect and the symptoms that come along with it. In my cohort of the Master's in Conflict Facilitation and Organizational Change, I see other "wounded healers," persons who have been through experiences of personal and/or collective trauma. This coincidence made me even more curious about how the two things are interconnected: trauma transformation and conflict facilitation. This was my motivation for a deeper research of the interrelation between trauma healing and facilitator development. Why I prefer the term "transformation" over the term "healing" will be part of the discussion in this paper.

Research Questions

Why is it so important for a conflict facilitator to work through one's own abuse history? To answer this question I had to ask a few more questions:

1. What are the basic concepts about trauma and the recovery from trauma in the context of scientific research?
2. How does process-oriented psychology approach the concept of trauma and the recovery from trauma?
3. How do the different approaches compare to each other?
4. What are the effects and benefits of knowing one's own abuse history as a facilitator?
5. What does it take to work through one's own history of abuse? What does theory feel like when we are in the process?

Goals of This Research

My overall goal for this paper is to connect theory to personal experience. It can be divided into the following goals:

1. Gaining a cognitive understanding of my own developmental process as a facilitator.
2. Formulating a theoretical approach to trauma and trauma transformation from the perspective of process-oriented psychology.
3. Gaining an understanding of the benefits of the process-oriented approach to trauma and trauma transformation in the context of conflict facilitation.
4. Connecting the theory to my concrete personal experience of conflict facilitation training and trauma transformation.

Research Focus

The focus of this paper is on the transformation of intrapersonal trauma and its effects, from the perspective of the person who has been on the receiving end of the traumatic experience. My background hypothesis is that conflict facilitation is as much the means of transforming trauma, as it benefits from the results of such transformation. What do I mean by this? Most experiences of abuse and trauma happen in human relationships. Therefore they profoundly affect the way that the person on the receiving end of the traumatic experience relates to others. In the context of conflict, on one end of a continuum there is avoidance, while on the other end we find an addictive tendency to attack others. Avoidance might also be combined with self-attack. Neither extreme is healthy. To become a facilitator first of our own inner conflicts and then of the conflicts in our life is a means to reconnect with oneself and with others, one of the goals of trauma recovery as we will see. It is crucial to be able to facilitate our inner conflicts and the conflicts we have in our own lives, if we want to enable ourselves to facilitate the conflicts of other people.

These two processes, learning to facilitate intrapersonal and interpersonal conflict, and working through one's own history of abuse and trauma, are cross-fertilizing processes. One of the core concepts I am exploring in the context of trauma transformation and facilitator development is the concept of inner oppression, its effects, and its transformation.

Methodology

This paper contains a thorough review of comparative literature upon which I build my theoretical framework. Exemplary case material is drawn from the author's personal experience of the last 2 years and fleshes out the theoretical frame.

Definitions of terms used (e.g., trauma, trauma recovery, trauma transformation, process-oriented psychology, conflict, inner opposition) will be given in context.

Limitations

The focus of this paper is intrapersonal trauma transformation and its effects, from the perspective of the person who has been on the receiving end of the traumatic experience. I explore in depth the inner work of the facilitator that is part of the preparation for every conflict facilitation process. I do not focus on group facilitation nor do I speak about two-party conflict facilitation in the context of organizations or groups. I do not explore the viewpoint of the perpetrator of abuse and trauma, although I speak a lot about the interrelation between victimization and the internalized perpetrator's energy. I do not propose a new concept of trauma therapy, rather, I constrain myself to the context of leadership development, even though I reference recent concepts of trauma therapy.

Contribution

Within the field of process-oriented psychology, a theoretical frame for trauma theory and leadership development has not yet been published. I see my contribution as bringing together theory and personal experience in order to flesh out the concepts and make them understandable.

Audience

This master's thesis aims first at my study committee of the MACF3 cohort, then at all interested Processwork students and diplomats. More broadly, I hope that others interested in the field of trauma healing, inner work, and conflict facilitation may find it useful.

Overview

Chapter 2 contains a synopsis of several scientific approaches to trauma and trauma recovery. It starts with the definition of trauma and of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), gives an overview of the diagnosis and symptomatology, and explains different concepts of trauma healing.

Chapter 3 explains the basic concepts and core hypothesis of process-oriented psychology. From there I explicate a process-oriented view on trauma and symptoms of PTSD. Core to this section is the concept of trauma transformation built on the basic definition of trauma and the process of trauma transformation by the process-oriented trauma researcher Emetchi, the comparison of this concept to the recovery process as framed by Judith Herman (1997), and the concept of inner opposition in conflict as worked out by the process-oriented conflict researcher Joe Goodbread (2010). Other voices, especially the voice of Arnold Mindell, founder of process-oriented psychology, are called upon to enrich the discussion and to substantiate my thoughts. Theory is reflected in examples of my own conflict facilitation development and my own trauma transformation process.

In Chapter 4 I give a tentative answer to the initial question: Why is it important for a facilitator to work through their own history of abuse and trauma? I then summarize the core assumptions of the process-oriented approach to conflict.

Chapter 5 contains case material drawn from facilitated conflicts to illustrate the points made in the previous chapters.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review provides an overview of how trauma is understood in some of the recent scientific research. The findings of my research are discussed against my own background as a process-oriented psychologist in the second section of this paper.

In the context of trauma research I base my studies mainly on the following contemporary authors. I also reference other sources.

Judith Herman is a Professor of Clinical Psychiatry at Harvard Medical School and the director of Training at the Victims of Violence Program in the Department of Psychiatry at the Cambridge Health Alliance. She is also is a founding member of the Woman's Mental Health Collective. She was one of the first researchers to investigate trauma.

Babette Rothschild is a psychotherapist and social worker. She is a member of the International and European Societies for Traumatic Stress Studies, the Association of Traumatic Stress Specialists, the National Association of Social Workers, and the U. S. Association of Body Psychotherapy (Rothschild, 2000).

Peter Levine holds doctorates in medical biophysics from the University of California at Berkeley and in psychology from International University. He is the developer of "Somatic Experiencing," a body-oriented trauma treatment (Levine, 1998).

In the field of brain research I draw upon the theory of Gerald Hüther, German Professor of Neurobiology and head of the Zentralstelle für Neurobiologische Präventionsforschung, in English: The Central Department of Neurobiologic Prevention Research of the University of Göttingen and Mannheim/Heidelberg.

Traumatic Events

The DSM-IV catalogue of Psychiatric Diagnosis and Criteria defines a traumatic event as one "involving direct personal experience of an event that involves actual or threatened death or serious injury, or other threat to one's physical integrity; or witnessing an event that involves death, injury, or a threat to the physical integrity of another person; or learning about

unexpected or violent death, serious harm, or threat of death or injury experienced by a family member or other close associate. (DSM IV, n.d.)

Direct personal experience includes amongst others military combat, being kidnapped or held as hostage, torture, terrorist attack, incarceration as a prisoner of war or in a concentration camp, violent personal assault such as rape and other physical attack, as well as repeated events like domestic violence and childhood abuse. The experience of physical and emotional neglect in childhood is also considered to be a cause of traumatic stress (Bauer, 2004/2007; Perry, 2006; Rothschild, 2000).

Through traumatic experiences a person is exposed to an extreme state involving loss of control, helplessness, intensive fear, and the threat of annihilation (Herman, 1997). Being exposed to war or traumatic events in families can affect subsequent generations, the children and grandchildren of the trauma victims (Levine, 1997, p. 189).

How We Respond to Traumatic Events

The response to trauma is always a psychophysical experience, even if the body was not harmed by the event (Rothschild, 2000). The immediate response is a strong stress reaction of the sympathetic branch of one's autonomic nervous system to prepare one's body and mind for fighting or fleeing (Herman, Rothschild, 2000; Levine, 1998). If the threat is so overwhelming that neither a fight nor flight response seems to make any sense, our body freezes. The antagonistic parasympathetic branch of the autonomic nervous system is activated to the same extent as the sympathetic branch (normally they work hand in hand; while one is activated the other is reduced). Levine (1998) describes this state as having the feet on the gas pedal and the brakes, at the same time. It's like a mouse playing dead when the cat catches her. This is a survival strategy we share with other mammals. It has two functions: to prevent the mouse from experiencing pain, and to give the mouse a last

chance, because the cat does not like to eat an already dead prey. In this freezing reaction the level of arousal of our nervous system is extremely high.

Psychiatric Description of Post Traumatic Stress

DSM-IV associates the following symptoms with post traumatic stress: (1) Flashbacks, or re-experiencing the event in various sensory forms; (2) avoiding persistently all stimuli that are associated with the trauma; and (3) chronic hyperarousal of the autonomic nervous system (DSM IV, n.d.). In the direct aftermath of the traumatic incident these symptoms are considered to be normal reactions of one's body and mind. PTSD is diagnosed when the symptoms last longer than 1 month and are combined with disturbances and loss of function in the person's relationships and/or job (Rothschild, 2000, p. 7).

PTS, PTSD, and C-PTSD

Post Traumatic Stress (PTS) is the stress that persists after a traumatic event (Rothschild, 2000, p. 7). Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is spoken about, if PTS "accumulates to the degree that it produces the symptoms outlined in DSM-IV" (p. 8). According to Rothschild a significant number of trauma survivors fall between the cracks: not recovered from their trauma and still experiencing PTS (p. 8). Many trauma survivors lead successful lives while seemingly split parts of their personality still suffer and impair their ability to cope with everyday challenges (Burgstaller, 2008).

Symptoms of PTSD can develop long after the actual trauma. Often these symptoms are not diagnosed as PTSD because the consequences of the above mentioned basic categories of symptoms may lead to several other diagnoses such as anxiety attacks, phobias, depression, eating disorders, or substance abuse. Herman (1997) relates diagnoses such as borderline personality disorder and multiple personality disorder to trauma. The long-term stress reaction affects the body as well and can lead to diverse body symptoms.

Complex post traumatic stress disorder (C-PTSD) is a diagnoses introduced by Herman (1997, p. 121). The concept describes a psychological injury that results from long-term and repeated exposure to social and/or interpersonal trauma with lack or loss of control, disempowerment, and the impossibility of escape. The latter criteria also holds true for many women in abusive relationships, where there is strong dependency and poor social support, as well as for children.

Frequency

Levine (1998) quotes a survey with a sample of over 1000 people in which 40% went through a traumatic experience in the last 3 years (p. 53). According to Bauer (2004/2007) several big surveys show about a quarter of the whole sample to have experienced severe trauma (p. 166). These general statistical numbers do not say much, because we do not know anything about the sample, but they give an impression that trauma is not a marginal phenomenon. Bauer (2004/2007) states that about half to one third of the victims of rape or violent abuse suffer from PTSD, compared with about 6 to 8% who have been involved in a car accident, and about 7% who have been a witness to a severe violent act (p. 166).

Trauma Consequences

There is great variety of consequences “depending on the age of the victim, the nature of the trauma, the response to the trauma, and the support to the victim in the aftermath” (Rothschild, 2000, p. 13). Levine (1998) distinguishes four components of trauma: (a) an extreme state of arousal, (b) psychophysical contraction, (c) dissociation, and (d) immobility combined with an intense feeling of helplessness. For Herman (1997) the symptoms of post traumatic stress fall into three categories: (a) Hyperarousal, (b) intrusion, and (c) constriction. Rothschild (2000) puts the emphasis on the body when she says, “Somatic disturbance is at the core of PTSD” (p. 7).

Intrusion, Flashbacks. The traumatic experience can be relived in all sensory channels. Our first impression of an experience usually comes from our senses, either from signals within our bodies (interoceptive) like visceral reactions, movements, position, behavioral sequences, or from the environment (exteroceptive) like sounds, sights, touches, tastes. These impressions are not encoded in language, but as somatic sensations. That is why the recall can work directly, without the interference of our conscious mind (see also the section on trauma as a learning experience). A similar somatic sensation can trigger the memory of the initial event and make the person re-experience unfiltered what she felt in the traumatic situation (Rothschild, 2000). These intrusions of somatic memory are very distressing because they are not controllable and can put the person into the initial emotional state of terror, no matter how much time has elapsed since the traumatic event.

Re-enactment. “Traumatized people relive the moment of trauma not only in their thoughts and dreams but also in their actions” (Herman, 1997, p. 39). That phenomenon is called Re-enactment. Re-experiencing the traumatic event can be seen as an attempt for self-healing. Levine (1998) even understands it as a survival strategy that we share with other mammals, for example cat’s play. In replaying parts of the situation we try to find strategies to stay in control the next time. Levine (1998) describes how animals use re-enactment of near escape situations to “review” their escape strategies to be better equipped next time (p. 174).

The problem with human beings is, that even if they remember the traumatic event, re-enactment is not conscious and not deliberate. We are not aware of what we are actually trying to do. Hence there’s always the danger of re-traumatization. Instead of empowering, the new situation is as hurtful as the original and the circle of pain, victimhood, and helplessness is reinforced.

Avoidance. Herman (1997) writes

Because reliving a traumatic experience provokes such intense emotional distress, traumatized people go to great lengths to avoid it. The effort to ward off intrusive symptoms, though self-protective in intent, further aggravates the posttraumatic syndrome, for the attempt to avoid reliving the trauma too often results in a narrowing of consciousness, a withdrawal from engagement with others, and an impoverished life. (p. 42)

Avoidance adds to the feeling of disempowerment. It is a vicious circle because it reinforces the feeling of helplessness and hinders the person in finding the resources to heal. These resources might lie in healthy relationships for example, and a victim's trust in every relationship is so severely damaged that he withdraws completely from relationships while a part of his personality is yielding to them and may be re-enacting the hurt, because there has not yet been the possibility to find new strategies to set clear boundaries.

Dissociation. The psychiatrist Pierre Janet was the first to use the term dissociation. At the time he was working with a woman who had been diagnosed with hysteria. Independently from each other Janet, Freud, and Breuer came to similar research results with the core message: Hysterical symptoms stem from past traumatic experiences (Herman, 1997, p. 23). Janet was the first to clearly and systematically show how dissociation is a direct psychological defense against overwhelming traumatic experience and the important role it plays in the divergent post traumatic stress responses (Van der Hart, O. & Rutger, H., 1998).

Dissociation is a survival strategy. Herman (1997) explains dissociation a "state of detached calm in which terror, rage, and pain dissolve. Events register in awareness but it is as though these events have been disconnected from their ordinary meanings" (p. 43). Perception may be numbed or distorted, and one's sense of time may alter, as in slow motion. The experience does not seem real any more. The person may experience an out-of-body experience (e.g., observing herself and the perpetrator from a corner in the room). The person is indifferent,

passive, and emotionally distant. She experiences depersonalization and derealization (p. 43).

Mild forms of dissociation are part of our normal psychic everyday repertoire (Levine, 1997). We can be so absorbed by some inner experience, be it a fantasy, thinking about a conflict we had at work, body pain, or something else, that we do not notice our environment for some seconds or even minutes. We have to go back to see if we closed the window after leaving the bathroom, we were elsewhere in our minds.

A controlled and deliberate form of dissociation is used in hypnosis, called hypnotic dissociation (Herman, 1997, p. 43). A friend of mine is so afraid of injections that his dentist uses hypnosis on him before the treatments and my friend does not feel pain at all.

Through dissociation we can detach ourselves from the most extreme experiences of physical and psychological pain. It is our innate capacity to reduce the perception of pain that is more than useful in a life threatening experience. One can still walk or run with a broken leg for example. But although the state of traumatic dissociation resembles hypnotic trance there is an important difference: traumatic dissociation occurs not under controlled circumstances and not by choice (Herman, 1997, p. 44).

There is no one consistent scientific theory of what happens to our brain when we dissociate. Rothschild (2000) explains the phenomenon with the splitting of the implicit and explicit memory as a consequence to trauma. I will talk about this in the section Trauma as learning experience. What we can say so far is that dissociation involves a splitting of awareness. Levine (1997) cites Woody Allen, "I am not afraid of dying. I just don't want to be there when it happens" (p. 136). In trauma, dissociation is an immensely powerful tool enabling us to endure a situation that is beyond endurance (p. 138).

However, when hyperarousal persists after the event, dissociation may become chronic and a way of coping with life. People who have been repeatedly traumatized as young children “. . . often adopt dissociation as a preferred mode of being in the world. They dissociate readily and habitually without being aware of it” (Levine, 1997, p. 138). Even when not habituated, dissociation might be a reaction to stress in everyday life, because the arousal in the autonomous nervous system triggers the traumatic somatic memory (Levine, 1997; Rothschild, 2000). Dissociation is a highly individual reaction: “. . . there seems to be evidence that the use of dissociation as a response to trauma is influenced both by genetics and personality structure” (Levine, 1997, p. 141).

Dissociation and intrusion go hand in hand. “It is not possible to have traumatic flashbacks without some form of traumatic dissociation also being operable, dissociation can occur without flashbacks” (Rothschild, 2000, p. 65).

A consequence of dissociation is the partial or total separation of different aspects of the trauma. The story of what is happening is separated from the physiological and psychological reactions (p. 65).

One might forget parts of the traumatic event or the whole event. Levine (1998) reports an example of the latter. Another might remember sequences, but feel nothing. Or the contrary: she might feel terror but not be able to tell why. This might feel like the intrusion of a whole other personality. In the extreme form of dissociation whole personalities become separated from consciousness (dissociative personality disorder). Another consequence of the pain reducing effect can be “long-lasting alterations in the regulation of endogenous opioids, which are natural substances having the same effects as opiates within the central nervous system” (Herman, 1997, p. 44). Herman connects this fact to the increased substance abuse of many trauma survivors (p. 44).

Levine developed a practical model to explain the separation of elements of the experience, the SIBAM model: Sensation, Image, (automatic) Behavior, Affect, and Meaning. A woman who has been raped might have terrible flashbacks of images (image) and feel petrified (affect), while at the same time feeling a numbness in her body (no sensation) and mind, not being able to connect with the part of her who had been attacked (no meaning). Or she might feel terrible pains in some parts of her body (sensation) while remembering nothing (no meaning, no image, no affect, no behavior). A man who has been traumatized by combat might act out aggressively and beat up his mates for seemingly no reason (behavior, affect) and does not feel any pain at all is identified as a war hero (no meaning, image, and sensation). Persons with anxiety attacks may report strong body reaction and resulting fear (sensation, affect), but it may be impossible to say what triggered the fear (image) or what is needed to reduce the fear (behavior).

Although all authors I cited agree that dissociation is a core element of trauma effects, it is not included in the DMS-IV, which I find interesting. Why would that be? My hypothesis is that it has something to do with its unfathomable quality and its power. Scientific research has until now not been able to show what exactly happens in our brains when we dissociate. Dissociation is a powerful tool of our psyche. In chapter 3, I will talk about dissociation in the context of process-oriented psychology. I will show that we can find a place in ourselves from which the differentiation between pathologic traumatic dissociation and positive hypnotic dissociation is not relevant any more. From this place we can find direct access to a deep source of power in ourselves, instead of seeing ourselves as victims of a power that we are not able to control. This might change the perspective on seeing the coping strategies after interpersonal trauma only as a disorder. Rather, I propose that one can regain the inherent power in the so-called symptoms.

Hyper-arousal. For Levine (1998) hyper-arousal is the core of the development of trauma. In his theory trauma symptoms arise because of the frozen

energy that could not be released after the decay of the traumatic experience and not due to the experience itself (Levine, 1998, p. 29). He compares the energy to that of a tornado (Levine, 1998, p. 20). Freezing is the reaction of the oldest parts of our brain, the brain stem and the limbic system. The natural process of these two brain parts after a freezing reaction would be to release the huge amount of energy that has gotten stuck and to complete the reaction by letting it go, then being able to relax and sleep deeply from exhaustion. The letting go happens through the body in a strong trembling reaction. In the animal world this process can be observed. When a prey animal survives the encounter with the hunter or another dangerous situation, its body releases the energy in an involuntary strong trembling reaction after which it reorients itself normally and lives on. We can observe that reaction when a bird hits a window. Just after the accident it looks like dead and after some time, if it is not injured severely, it “wakes up” trembling and flies off. Only when we try to rescue it and hold it in our hands do we endanger the bird’s survival by interrupting the shaking off reaction by adding a new threat.

Unfortunately the youngest part of our brain, the cortex, does something similar. It interrupts the process. Why so? When the freezing reaction dissolves, the freed energy activates emotional and physical reactions that are similar to the ones in the initial situation. These emotions elicit new stress reactions. We think this is bad, which is a fatal misinterpretation. Our own vital energy becomes a threat.

According to Levine, the vital and basically positive energy that is activated to protect us from danger is hindered in functioning. A greater amount is then transformed in affects like anger, rage, hate, or shame—which is an attempt to control the nonneutralized energy. When we suffer from trauma, the negative emotions and vital energy get linked so closely that we cannot distinguish one from the other any more. We begin to mistrust our vital energy (Levine, 1998, p. 153).

Hyper-vigilance. Hyper-vigilance is a result and also one of the strategies to control the remaining energy. In a state of hyper-vigilance, we overreact to every change of the inner or outer environment (Levine, 1998, p. 147). We are constantly ready to defend ourselves while missing useful defense strategies (p. 158). Instead of being apt to defend ourselves, we switch into a state of immobility and helplessness. We identify as victims (p. 163).

Disconnection. Trauma damages our sense of self, as Herman (1997) writes. We are forced to relive early identity struggles over autonomy, initiative, competence, identity, and intimacy. Trauma destroys faith in being able to live as an autonomous self in a relationship to another person (p. 52). Traumatic events scatter the sense of connection between an individual and the community in a crisis of faith (p. 55).

A sense of helplessness and hopelessness subsists, overall, or in only in certain situations. Emotions like shame, doubt, guilt, and feelings of inferiority accompany the attempt to make sense of what happened and regain control over one's life. Guilt for example can be seen as the desire to draw some useful lesson out of the disaster, blaming myself gives me a sense of control and power—I could have done better (Herman, 1997, p. 54). Emotions oscillate between polarities (e.g., aggression and intolerance to aggression, withdrawal, and search for intimacy) (p. 56).

Vulnerability and Resilience

Vulnerability. The severity of the impact of trauma is related to the intensity, duration, and number of people affected. On the personal level it depends on the stage of development, individual childhood history, emotional conflict, and adaptive style (Herman, 1997, p. 57). Long-term repeated traumatic exposure has the most serious consequences. Children and adolescents are by nature more vulnerable to traumatic experience because their sense of self is still in development. Trauma in adolescence compromises the three normal adaptive tasks: to form an identity, to

gradually separate from their family of origin, and to explore the wider social world (Herman, 1997, p. 61). Combat and rape, two frequent traumas, often take place in this sensitive period. Chronic, prolonged stress during the developmental years from neglect, chronic illness, or a dysfunctional family system can have similar effects (Rothschild, 2000, p. 81).

An important factor is social support after the traumatic event. Rothschild (2000) describes cases where emotional reactions of close people directly after an accident were more hurtful than the event itself. In the case of rape adequate social support is often missing. Our society still tends to partly blame the victim for the incident, and it can be as subtle as reproaching her for having been out alone on the street ("how stupid"). The victim gets easily isolated from her social environments, like school. However, social isolation is not only the experience of abuse victims but is also often reported from soldiers coming back from war (Herman, 1997).

Trauma and Stress Resilience. How come some people survive traumatic events seemingly unharmed? We can formulate the factors of vulnerability positively and find factors of resilience, like a stable and supportive social background, for example, or successful accomplishment of the developmental tasks. It has been found that people resilient to extreme stress are highly sociable, have an alert and active temperament, and skills in communicating with others. They have thoughtful strategies as well as an active coping style. According to a long-term study, about 1 in 10 children have a strong sense of being able to affect their own destiny. Herman calls this sense "internal locus of control" (Herman, 1997, p. 58). It gives the person the capacity to make purposeful action in contact with others, even in the most dangerous situations, while ordinary people get paralyzed and/or isolated. Action with and for others seems to be a strong protective factor, while impulsive, isolated action (a "Rambo" attitude) adds to vulnerability (Herman, 1997, p. 59).

A study of Vietnam veterans who did not develop PTSD symptoms shows the following strategies: They did not engage in rape, mutilation, torture, or other atrocities. They accepted fear and strove to overcome it by preparing themselves for danger. They considered rage to be dangerous to one's survival and therefore did not give in to it. They could still see the enemy as human beings (as cited in Herman, 1997, p. 59).

Trauma as a Learning Experience

Implicit and explicit memory system. Our memory works in two separate systems (Roth, 2003; Rothschild, 2000; Storch, 1994). The explicit or declarative memory is what we usually mean in our everyday language by the term "memory." It stores and processes facts, thoughts, and ideas, descriptions of procedures, and operations. It is what we call "mind." With the explicit memory we narrate our life to ourselves in words (Wilson, 2007). We create sense in an intellectual way. We store memories of events in the timeline of our life. The process is conscious and cognitive. The explicit memory is mature when we are about 3 years old. That is why we do not remember in detail explicit events in our early childhood. The explicit memory is a recent development in evolution. It needs the activity of the cerebral cortex, helped by the integrative function of the hippocampus in the limbic system of our brain.¹

The implicit (nondeclarative or procedural) memory works unconsciously from the beginning of our lives. It processes emotions, body sensations, and any sensory information. Every experience we have is stored and remembered together with its emotional imprint. The implicit memory compares the signals from our external and internal environment (sensory or somatic) to our stored past experiences to provide us with an automatic response to that stimulus, a pattern that we have already used

¹ The limbic system is located between the brain stem and the cerebral cortex. It regulates survival behaviors (eating, sex and reproduction, and fight, flight, and freeze reactions). It evaluates a situation and tells the autonomic nerve system either to rest or to prepare for effort.

successfully. For this process it needs an average of 0.5 seconds, much quicker than explicit memory. Only if no adequate response is found in the files does the information get processed consciously to find a new response. This is the system that provides us with automatic skills and procedures like riding a bike or driving a car.

Traumatic events and the two memory systems. Under extreme stress explicit processing is suppressed (Herman, 1997, p. 39; Rothschild, 2000, p. 31). Reactions have to be very quick. There are two related areas within the limbic system that are central to memory storage, the amygdala and the hippocampus. The amygdala processes highly charged emotional memories such as terror and horror and becomes highly active both during and while remembering a traumatic incident. The task of the hippocampus on the contrary is to “give time and space context to an event,” thus “putting our memories into their proper perspective and place in our life’s time line” (Rothschild, 2000, p. 12).

With the help of the hippocampus, any event gets a beginning, a middle, and an end. It has been shown that the activity of the hippocampus often gets suppressed during traumatic threat. That is the reason why the event does not get its proper place in personal history but keeps invading the present (Rothschild, 2000, p. 12). At the same time the function of the amygdala does not get suppressed. That is why “upsetting emotions, disturbing body sensations, and confusing behavioral impulses can all exist in implicit memory without access to information about the context in which they arose or what they were about” (p. 31).

The incongruence between the two memory systems is a stress in itself. To feel safe we have to be able to make sense of what we are feeling and experiencing in our bodies in the context of the situation we are in. Otherwise we get the feeling of being crazy or at least abnormal, which adds to the feeling of alienation.

Conditioned memory “Multicoding.” Rothschild (2000) explains processing of the implicit memory in a traumatic threat by using the behavioral concepts of classical and operant conditioning. In classical conditioning sensory stimuli get paired when they occur in the same moment, and create the same reaction. In the classical experiments of Ivan Pavlov, the discoverer of classical conditioning, the dog salivates at the ring of a bell as if he was given food, because it had heard the sound of the bell several times just before it was fed (as cited in Rothschild, 2000, p. 31).

In the same way any signal that was present during a traumatic situation can be connected to a body reaction, without conscious access. If a rapist wore a red T-shirt for example, that color could be paired with the intense fear the victim experienced. The intensity of this affect increases the learning effect. Over time chains of conditioned stimuli can be created. For example, there could be a street with a restaurant that is decorated exactly in that color. The woman experiences panic every time she walks the street, but does not know exactly why. After a while the street itself is a conditioned stimulus, and then maybe all streets become conditioned stimuli for panic, and the person is thereafter diagnosed with agoraphobia. The effects of classical conditioning are enhanced by operant conditioning—learning with reward and punishment. The strong negative affects and body sensations act as punishment—something to avoid in future.

The connection between fear and learning. In the last 20 years neurobiological research has dissolved the disconnection between body and mind. We are on our way to a more integrative kind of thinking. Body and mind are thought of as two entities that interfuse each other (Hüther, 2005, p. 14). The current state of knowledge sees our brain as a lifelong adaptive and malleable structure. Our average 10 billion nerve cells are able to adaptively reorganize themselves in new connections. Our brain is a permanent construction site where new connections are constantly being built and enforced, and old connections are being dismantled.

Gerald Hüther, German neurobiologist, published his research results in 1996 and postulated the “Central Adaptation Syndrome.” It was a revolutionary concept, because it gave a complete new interpretation of stress reactions as master builder of our brains.

Hüther (1996, 2005) explains in depth the evolution of this adaptive brain structure. The archaic stress reaction that we still share with insects and other creatures with hard-wired controller brains is fight or flight in the short-term and in the long run, survive or die out. With the first vertebrates, evolution introduced the possibility of releasing messengers through our blood, the stress hormones, which initiate an emergency reaction in moments of danger in order to ensure momentary survival. The feeling that goes along with what we call stress reaction is fear. If an adaptive solution to the dangerous circumstance can be found, the stress reaction is controllable. We overcome our fear. It is through controllable stress reactions that our brain gets wired and specializes. Synaptic connections get fortified, more neurotransmitter molecules are transferred, and several simultaneously active nerve cells wire together. Donald Hebb formulated this hypothesis already in the 1940s: “Cells that fire together, wire together” (as cited in Bauer, 2004, p. 59). It was proved in the 1990s. That is how a neuronal network is created. That is how we learn. Hüther (2005, p. 66) calls this process “bahnen”—“to pave the way.” Initially it is like walking over a meadow for the first time, after which we see a slight track. With repeated activation a trail will develop out of the track, then a dirt road, a road, and maybe finally a highway. Our brain is an organ that depends on how we use it, and when we use the same track often enough, the stress disappears. We have learned to cope with the situation. An automatism is created. We do not need to decide or find a solution any more. One of the first stress reactions in human life is when the mother disappears. When she repeatedly comes back, the infant will learn to trust that she will come back and this will build her trust in relationships in general.

What would happen to the vertebrates if the outer conditions changed so extremely that no adequate solution could be found? The stress reaction got uncontrollable. In the long run this could overload the system and meant the demise of the species because of disease (stress hormones suppress the immune system) or infertility (stress hormones suppress the production of sex hormones). Now came the turning point in evolution according to Hüther (2005): The stress hormones could not only affect the body but also the brain. The brain is not only the starting point of the stress reaction but also its goal! Uncontrollable stress reactions unwire the connections of brain cells. Highways can be rebuilt into trails. That is how the stress reaction remodels our brains and sees to it that formerly useful but now hindering automatism encoded in neuronal networks can be dissolved and new ways of acting and reacting can be found. In both processes the catalyst is fear. That is in short the concept of the "Central Adaptation Syndrome" (Hüther, 1996). Of course the procedures are much more complex than I have explained here. For our purpose the most important message is that the former paradigm of a one-sided malignant interpretation of psychological stress is no longer maintainable. This concept reevaluates the causes and the consequences of stress and fear. From a biological perspective stress and fear are crucial to any processes of adaptation and self-organization (Hüther, 2005, pp. 31-32). Hüther contradicts the classical stress theory of Hans Selye, the paradigm of eustress, the controllable stress reaction that was supposed to make us stronger, and distress the uncontrollable stress reaction that we should avoid. Rather, every stress reaction is positive in its essence and has a crucial survival function.

In the context of trauma the findings of Hüther combine with the theory of Levine who says that processing trauma includes reexperiencing the strong stress response and that the reaction of our conscious mind in trying to avoid these feelings is contra-productive to the healing process. From this perspective, reenactment can

also be seen as a positive attempt to “pave the way” to better and sustainable strategies in the face of the same threat.

Hüther does not downplay the negative effects of a long-lasting uncontrollable stress reaction. Humans are vertebrates and still experience consequences on the immune system and reproduction. However, for me, his interpretation sheds a new light on the healing, or better, the integration process of trauma.

Trauma and relationship. Because we human beings are social creatures, we are especially vulnerable in relationships. Our brain is very sensitive to even the most subtle alterations in our immediate social network. Especially intense experiences with others are stored over a long period of time. That is why even a memory of humiliation, defeat, and violation of our will or personal boundaries can evoke an uncontrollable strain, either continuously or from time to time (Hüther, 2005). It is from the treasure of our experiences that we form hypothesis of how the world is, was, and will be. No one can verify these hypothesis and we might not even know we have them, but we hold onto them as best as we can. Every commotion of our worldview due to a new experience is a threat and may trigger an uncontrollable stress reaction. It is even possible to elicit uncontrollable stress through imagination (Hüther, 2005, p. 42).

Trauma Recovery

The goal of recovery is to integrate the traumatic experience in one's personal history and give it its place in the past as one of many memories. Since the consequences of the traumatic experience can split the body and mind, integration needs an approach that is both cognitive and sensory. Emotions, images, body sensations, and the story of the event have to be reordered and joined to create meaning.

How the process of recovery is being framed depends on the underlying theory. To recover from trauma, according to Rothschild (2000), the missing link

between the implicit and explicit memory must be restored. This implies an understanding of the accompanying body sensations, to feel and identify them on a bodily level, and then to find words to name them, and if possible to clarify the relationship of the sensation to past trauma (p. 45). She recommends constantly referring to the body's awareness in therapy so that the client has control over the arousal that may be elicited by remembering the trauma.

Perry (2006/2008) and his team, who work with traumatized children, have developed an experiential approach through body experience. Depending on the age when the early childhood trauma happened or, in the case of neglect, began, all interventions have the purpose to slowly aid the brain to complete the tasks that are needed for its full development. He showed in numerous cases that it is possible with a lot of patience and even more care to help the child step-by-step to catch up with her brain development which had been disrupted by the trauma to the stage of development appropriate to her age.

Levine (1998) also works with body awareness, as a "felt sense." As explained earlier, his goal is to complete the natural process of releasing the enormous amount of dammed stress energy in a controlled way.

In her explanations, Herman (1997) lays much more emphasis on relationships. Because trauma disempowers a person and disconnects her from herself and others, the goal of recovery must be to empower the person and to create new connections. "Recovery can take place only in the context of relationships; it cannot occur in isolation" (p. 133). It has to recreate the psychological faculties that have been damaged or deformed: trust, autonomy, identity, intimacy, initiative, and competence. It has to validate the experience and to recognize personal strength.

Herman (1997) and Rothschild (2000) explain in depth their respective therapeutic approaches in the treatment of PTSD, which are beyond the scope of this paper. For my purpose the process of recovery is most relevant. Herman (1997)

describes three phases of recovery, which Rothschild follows implicitly: (a) Safety and the building of a trustful relationship with the therapist, (b) remembering and mourning, and (c) reconnection.

Safety

Before anything else can be done, any victim of trauma has to be as safe as possible. Before the person can confront any past memory and transform any process, her physical situation, her psychological situation, and her living situation must be basically stabilized. There have been times when it was thought that a big cathartic outburst of past memory would heal trauma and burn the past, but the present state of research considers cathartic interventions to be retraumatizing.

What does safety mean? First the source of the threat has to be removed. For a victim of abuse, this means that she can live in an environment where she is safe from her perpetrator. Safety may also include medical treatment of the most disturbing symptoms, physical and psychological, and to name the diverse symptoms in the context of trauma. It may mean establishing a living situation where there is a basic social support system.

Because of the consequences of disconnection, it might take a long time to establish a trusting relationship with the therapist. It is crucial that the person who suffers from trauma has as much control over his or her life and the recovery process as is possible. The relationship to the therapist serves as a model and might be the first relationship that the person engages in again.

Safety also has an intrapersonal aspect. Finding a place in oneself where one is at peace, a place where there is inner support, as little as it may be, is the beginning of reconnection, the beginning of regaining a home base so to speak, the beginning of feeling more secure. Reddemann (2008), German professor of psycho-traumatology, calls this positive dissociation. She uses imaginative inner work

methods to provide such an inner place. Rothschild (2000) and Levine (1998) use body awareness to gain space from which to metacommunicate and to control the stress reaction.

Remembrance and Mourning

Remembrance. In the second phase, the survivor tells his / her story of the trauma in depth and detail (Herman, 1997). Rothschild (2000) and Levine (1998) place an equivalent emphasis on body awareness in this stage in order to be able to reconnect explicit and implicit memory, and to find meaning in what happened as well as in what is still happening in proprioceptive, visual, or auditory intrusions. The split between feelings and mind is to be reconciled. This process helps to actually transform the traumatic memory into a “normal” memory that has its place and time in the person’s life line (Herman, 1997; Rothschild, 2000). The unspeakable can be spoken . . . and is heard. This is a process where the trauma survivor should always be in total control of the pace. Timing in the process is a tightrope walk: “Avoiding the traumatic memory leads to stagnation in the recovery process, while approaching them too precipitately leads to a fruitless and damaging reliving of the trauma” (Herman, 1997, p. 176). Proprioceptive awareness helps to calibrate the dose and intensity of the stress reaction in order to prevent retraumatization and further disconnection or destabilization.

Herman (1997) and Rothschild (2000) also consider it important to review the person’s life circumstances before the traumatic event, because this helps to restore a sense of continuity with the past that has been disrupted by the event. Rothschild (2000) then continues with what happened after the event. Sometimes what happened after the trauma experience, the way important members of the person’s social network reacted for example, can be as distressing as the event itself.

Remembering also consists in reviewing personal values that might have been deconstructed by the trauma (e.g., to be able to state the simple fact that it was

not right how one was treated). Questions of guilt and responsibility have to be discussed. “Why?” and “why me?” are questions that have no answer and still it is important to address them in order to be able to reconstruct a world view that includes the traumatic event and still makes sense (Herman, 1997).

Relationship in this phase is of immense importance to share the burden of the event itself but also to reconcile the sufferer with how he reacted to the event, internally and externally, and the consequence of the stress reaction he is still suffering from. On the other hand the reconstruction of the event might bring the victim into opposition with people important to her and endanger relationships (Herman, 1997) (e.g., when a family does not want to acknowledge the abuse of one of its members).

The recall includes emotions. Retelling is reliving the experience. “A narrative that does not include the traumatic imagery and bodily sensations is barren and incomplete. The ultimate goal, however, is to put the story, including its imagery, into words” (Herman, 1997, p. 177).

In the context of trauma as a learning experience and the theory of plasticity of our brains (Hüther, 2005), the recovery process is a learning process as well. As we have seen before, learning involves stress reactions. This information seems crucial to me. Healing trauma might involve stress reactions that are as strong as the original stress reaction. In the context of trauma healing, fear must not only be a recall of the initial fear but also a reaction to a deeper reorganizing process of the brain in order to dissolve maladaptive automatisms learned in the aftermath of a traumatic event.

There are diverse techniques to transform traumatic memory. Transformation includes always a form of testimony, be it formal or informal (Herman, 1997). Any testimony has a private dimension, which is confessional and spiritual, and a public aspect that is political and spiritual. A testimony needs to be heard. In the context of

political oppression part of restoration might be an open hearing of the atrocities that have been committed against human rights, like the truth commissions in South Africa. In any way, it is important that there are witnesses who take the victim seriously and have a moral stance.

When the meaning of the traumatic event is reviewed, questions of action arise: What can be done now to repair injustice? “By itself, reconstructing the trauma does not address the social or relational dimension or the traumatic experience” (Herman, 2007, p. 183).

Remembrance has a political dimension. In the beginning of psychoanalysis, Freud and Breuer listened thoroughly to their clients and cocreated healing. But they were shocked by what they heard: The women reported sexual harassment, abuse, incest, and violence. Freud summarized his findings in his early writings about hysteria wherein he also spoke about his reluctance to find sexual abuse at the essence of hysteric symptoms (Herman, 2007). As long as they had working class women as clients they were apt to hear the facts, but when it came to clients being women who belonged to upper class Vienna, the thought of this being truth was unbearable, and Freud finally changed his theory. What had been reported as reality was now seen as sexual fantasies. Freud’s theory had never been supported by the mainstream of science. He did not want to isolate himself more and it had never been his plan to challenge the patriarchal system he was living in (Herman, 1997). The question of whether to believe that the survivor is speaking the truth is controversially discussed to this day. Every testimony potentially undermines the power of those who do not want to hear it and who do not have to hear it because of their given social rank.

Levine (1998) discusses the question of memory and truth only on a personal level. His method can, but does not have to include the recall of the memory. He is more interested in the present moment than in the past, and says that it is neither possible nor necessary to change past events. All symptoms of trauma are for him

examples of constricted energy and forgotten lessons of life. It is enough to heal the actual symptoms after which we can be open to engage with the present, and to what life brings us (p. 48). He says that traumatic memory often can not be recalled completely because the overwhelming energy of the traumatic reaction is stored only in the implicit mode, as physiologic sensations and strong imagery. These images can be misleading (p. 98).

Mourning. Trauma inevitably brings the loss of psychological integrity and security in relationships. If there is physical harm, then often there is a loss of bodily integrity as well. Loss needs to be grieved. “To the extent that the patient is unable to grieve, she is cut off from a part of herself and robbed of an important part of her healing” (Herman, 2007, p. 188).

To Rothschild (2000), grief is a resource and a healing progression. Realizing the loss helps to relegate the experience to the past where it would naturally belong. Grief helps a person gain ground in the present and dissolve fear (p. 63). Herman (1997) goes one step further when she says: “Only through mourning everything that she has lost can the patient discover her indestructible inner life” (p. 188).

Herman (1997) describes three fantasies as inner obstacles to grieving: revenge, forgiveness, and compensation, all of which are attempts for greater empowerment. Revenge fantasies are a mirror image of the traumatic memory with a role switch from victim to perpetrator and stem from a longing for catharsis. Revenge seems to be the only way to restore power, but instead of empowering, repetitive revenge fantasies repeat the horror internally and degrade the self-image of the trauma survivor. Grieving, on the contrary, leads to “righteous indignation” instead of “helpless fury” (p. 189). “Giving up the fantasy of revenge does not mean giving up the quest for justice; on the contrary, it begins the process of joining with others to hold the perpetrator accountable for his crimes” (p. 189).

The fantasy of forgiveness is also an attempt for empowerment and at the same time self-torture, because forgiveness remains out of reach for most human beings (Herman, 1997, p. 190). Restorative love and forgiveness should first be rediscovered for oneself. After the grieving period, the survivor might feel sorrow or compassion for the perpetrator, but the healing process does not require forgiveness for the perpetrator (p. 190).

The fantasy of compensation stems from the legitimate desire for compensation. However, the quest for fair compensation presents a potential trap and a resistance to “facing the full reality of what is lost” (Herman, 1997, p. 190). Only mourning can honor the loss.

. . . in reality the struggle for compensation ties the patient’s fate to that of the perpetrator and holds her recovery hostage to his whims. Paradoxically, the patient may liberate herself from the perpetrator when she renounces the hope of getting any compensation from him. As grieving progresses the patient comes to envision a more social, general, and abstract process of restitution, which permits her to pursue the just claims without ceding any power over her present life to the perpetrator. (p. 190)

Mourning restores the sense of responsibility for oneself and one’s life. “The only way that the survivor can take full control over her recovery is to take responsibility for it. The only way she can discover her undestroyed strengths is to use them to their fullest” (Herman, 1997, p. 192). The strain of the process of remembering and mourning should not be underestimated. It takes a lot of psychological energy. It should not be expected that anyone going through this process could function at the fullest of her capacities. The process of remembering and mourning can have a terrifying timeless quality. It may seem like a never-ending story not only to the person who goes through it but also to the people surrounding him. They might become impatient. However, the process has its own timing. It takes as many repetitions as needed. In the end the event is integrated as normal memory. The event comes to take its place in the person’s past history as important,

but one of many experiences. However, every major change, every turn in the life cycle, may reawaken trauma and bring new aspects to light (Herman, 1997, p. 195).

Reconnection

The third stage of trauma recovery consists in reconciling with oneself, reconnecting with others, and learning how to stand for oneself (Herman, 1997).

In the third stage of recovery the traumatized person recognizes that she has been a victim and understands the effects of her victimization. Now she is ready to incorporate the lesson of her traumatic experience into her life. She is ready to take concrete steps to increase her sense of power and control, to protect herself against future danger, and to deepen her alliances with those whom she has learned to trust. (Herman, 1997, p. 197)

Reconnecting with oneself. Reconciling with oneself and finding ways to build a new self is both exciting and full of uncertainty. It is a period of trial and error, daring to make mistakes and rejoicing in unexpected success (Herman, 1997, p. 202). By the nature of the process, fear is a companion on this journey. The process includes discovering and training a new tolerance for stress and fear that is disconnected from the victim's identity and is seen as a normal ingredient of personal development (Bünger, 2010).

Life becomes less dramatic as the addiction for intensity loosens its grip. It is all right to become an ordinary person. Slowly it is possible to let go of the aspects of the personality that have been formed by the trauma and to become more forgiving to oneself.

Compassion and respect for the traumatized, victim self join with a celebration of the survivor self. At this stage of recovery is achieved, the survivor often feels a sense of renewed pride. This healthy admiration of the self differs from the grandiose feeling of specialness sometimes found in victimized people. The victim's specialness compensates for self-loathing and feelings of worthlessness. Always brittle, it admits of no imperfection. Moreover, the victim's specialness carries with it a feeling of difference and isolation from others. By contrast, the survivor remains fully aware of her ordinariness, her weaknesses, and her limitations, as well as her connection and indebtedness to others. This awareness provides a balance, even as she rejoices in her strengths. (Herman, 1997, p. 204)

Reconnection with others. A trauma survivor of childhood trauma or marital abuse might not have learned a lot of the relational skills that other adults take for

granted. Engaging in new relationships means focusing on the issues of identity and intimacy. Herman (1997) describes this stage as a second adolescence (p. 205).

Standing for oneself. For victims of childhood abuse, taking concrete steps to increase their sense of power might include confronting the family with what happened. In doing so she might find a sense of compensation.

Another way to use regained personal power is to engage in social action.

Herman (1997) calls it “survivors mission” (p. 207):

a significant minority, as a result of the trauma, feel called upon to engage in a wider world. These survivors recognize a political or religious dimension in their misfortune and discover that they can transform the meaning of their personal tragedy by making it the bases for social action. While there is no way to compensate for an atrocity, there is a way to transcend it, by making it a gift to others. (Herman, 1997, p. 207)

Yet another possibility to take action is to bring the perpetrator to court.

By making a public complaint or accusation, the survivor defies the perpetrator’s attempt to silence and isolate her, and she opens the possibility of finding new allies. When others bear witness to the testimony of a crime, others share the responsibility for restoring justice. Furthermore the survivor may come to understand her own legal battle as a contribution to a larger struggle, in which her actions may benefit others as well as herself. (Herman, 1997, p. 210)

Yet she has to consider the possibility that she might not win the legal battle.

She should also be aware that in her willingness to confront the perpetrator she has already overcome her learned helplessness.

When Is Trauma Resolved?

According to Herman (1997), never. This may hold true for any prolonged and repeated trauma experience. The trauma will always be a part of the personal history, and new aspects of it may have to be confronted when the time is ripe for it. But that does not mean that the trauma survivor cannot enjoy life. On the contrary the integration of the trauma might give a new flavor to what it means to be alive and to enjoy every day to the fullest.

From the perspective of trauma therapy, however, there are seven criteria for the resolution of trauma. Herman (1997) quotes the formulation of Mary Harvey (p.

213): (a) physical symptoms and (b) the feelings associated with traumatic memories are manageable; (c) the person has authority over her memory; (d) the memory of the trauma itself is a coherent narrative that is connected to the feeling level; (e) the person's self-esteem is restored, as well as (f) important relationships; and (g) the person has reconstructed a system of belief and meaning including the story of the trauma. For Levine (1998), everyone who takes responsibility for the healing of trauma contributes not only to personal well-being but to the well-being of society as a whole (p. 68).

Chapter 3: A Process-Oriented Approach to Trauma

Process-Oriented Psychology

Process Work and Worldwork. I understand process-oriented psychology as defined by the authors Hauser, Helbling, Weidmann and Weyermann (2009): Process-oriented psychology, also called Process Work, has been developed by Arny Mindell and colleagues since 1981. It is an interdisciplinary, experiential approach to personal and collective change. Arnold Mindell has been trained as a physicist, psychologist, and Jungian analyst. Process Work has theoretical and methodological roots in the analytic psychology of C. G. Jung, in constructivism, physics, Taoism, and in shamanic cultures. Process Work is a teleological and resource oriented approach.

One of the core axioms is that the solution to a problem is found within the problem itself. Moreover, in thoroughly exploring the quality of the disturbing energy, we get access to parts of our personality that have been marginalized by our personal and/or collective belief systems and identifications. Within the marginalized parts, energies, or persons we find the useful missing information. Once this information is retrieved, we might develop new ideas, not only to solve intrapersonal conflicts and diminish personal suffering, but also to find new ways to communicate with others and solve interpersonal or even collective conflicts.

A second core assumption is included in the name “process-oriented” instead of “state oriented.” By nature everything is always in the process of change. The more we are able to detect the early signals to change and evolution, the better we can actively engage in them instead of being pushed around by them.

Since the 1990s “Worldwork,” the integral sociological aspect of Process Work, has been developed based on the same paradigm. Worldwork is “a method, that helps small and large groups of people to live, work and grow together within their environment” (Mindell, 1992, p. 3). It is an attempt to develop a theory of social transformation. Worldwork utilizes small and large group process as part of its

methodology. In group processes all possible positions within a topic are invited to speak up, even the most extreme and polarized that normally would get marginalized and might only get heard through violent acts. Worldwork brings a new paradigm: conflict is solved by amplification, not primarily by de-escalation. That does not imply that Process Work is in favor of war. The main difference to uncontrolled escalation is the paradigm of awareness: as in personal change work the process of escalation is slowed down and thoroughly explored and its implicit meaning and information for all parties extracted.

The paradigm of awareness underlies all process-oriented methods. Having awareness of what is happening in the moment implies the use, not only of our cognitive capacities, but our body sensations, sensational input from the environment, inner images, feelings, emotions, and so forth; in short the whole range of our explicit and implicit mind system, including dream-like experiences that normally are not included in information processing.

Primary and secondary process. Let me explain this basic model of process-oriented psychology: The primary process² stands for the parts of our personality that we identify with. There are parts we identify with in general like certain capacities, skills, or roles. We say: I am friendly, I am a teacher, I am a mother/father, I am strong/weak Which parts of our identity we allow ourselves to live, depends also on the context. In a business meeting I need other parts of my personality than when I play with children. In the first case I might marginalize my playfulness and irrationality because I consider them as inappropriate. I want to be goal-oriented and efficient. The parts of our personality that we marginalize, may it be always or in the moment, belong to our secondary process. Process Work

² Mindell used the word process to emphasize the flexible character of our identity in contrast to a more or less stable identity as postulated by Eric Erikson and others. Since the 1990s the constructivist approach to identity has become accepted in identity research. The recent concept of identity is one of permanent reconstruction that requires an active involvement of the individual. (Storch & Riedener, 2005, p. 18)

assumes that these secondary parts live a life of their own. One could say that they are like marginalized persons. In the long run, it's no fun to be relegated to the fringe. They come forward and send signals. Signals could be body symptoms, body sensations, auditory, or visual signals. Or the secondary energy comes forward in relationships to other persons, as the loved or the hated in my vis-à-vis, or in unintended communication signals that I send and that disturb others. The secondary process can also express itself in the dream figures of our nighttime dreams. If I identify as a friendly person and marginalize my aggressive energy, judging aggression in general, there is a chance that I will have to deal time and again with aggressive and unfriendly people in my daily life. In Jung's theory of the shadow, we would speak of projection. We project unwanted parts of our personality onto others (e.g., Jacobi, 1971/1978). Another possibility is that an aggressive tumor builds in my body.³ In short: We experience these signals as disturbances. Once these disturbances are unfolded, the quality of the marginalized part shows itself and can be explored. Because of the dreamlike quality of the signals, Mindell called the unfolded energies dream figures.

The force that keeps the secondary process on the margins is our beliefs and values, shaped through our personal experiences and history, cultural norms, as well as conscious choices we made. Various experiments have shown how our implicit memory system influences our behavior much more than our conscious mind. We might for example think of ourselves as democratic open people who are not racist. Implicit Association Tests, where people had to combine "good" and "bad" words with either white or black (or foreign) people, have shown again and again that many people need more time to associate "good" words with black people or people of color than with white people (Dijksterhuis, 2010). These implicit values shape our

³ Process Work began with the exploration of marginalization, body symptoms and dreams. Mindell observed in work with his clients that the energy of a body symptom is mirrored in nighttime dreams. From there, he developed the concept of the "Dreambody." Here I refer to an example in Mindell (1991, pp. 12-13).

behavior even if we do not want them to. So we might act racist (secondary process), although we do not identify as such. This is a good example of how secondary processes send second messages, called double signals. If I do not identify at all as racist and am unconscious of how my behavior is also shaped from a society, from a white mainstream and its central media, I might upset my black friends with my behavior and wonder why.

Now, to apply this concept directly to traumatic experiences would be much too simplifying if not cynical, if understood in a causal way: Because I marginalize my aggressive energies, I am raped, for example. Before trying to formulate a process-oriented perspective on trauma, I want to introduce another basic concept.

Levels of reality. Consensus reality contains all reactions to and descriptions of our experiences and perceptions that we share with other people, our common construction of reality so to say. It is the description of reality that we agree on, that we call objective. "By creating a common reality, we share a certain worldview with our family, friends, group, subculture, culture, nation and world" (Mindell, 2000, p. 42). In *Quantum Mind*, Mindell shows in the context of simple counting how the construction of such a common reality always includes a process of marginalization (Mindell, 2000, p. 41). Every term we use is an abstraction, a consensus that we agreed on, and for which we also marginalized various aspects. Consensus reality is strongly influenced by the culture we live in. In our culture we agree on a certain use of language. This is a predominantly unconscious process. We pass the seemingly evident on to the next generation and think the world is like that, and we know what our terms mean.

When we look a little closer there is much less consensus than we think. Though we may marginalize individual and unconscious aspects, they do not simply disappear. We still perceive them in our individual experience, and when we are in conflict with others about certain facts and interpretations. That individual level also

creates reality, called “nonconsensus-reality” or “dreamland.” That is the level of our subjective experience, the level of our inner voices and conflicts, of our feelings, sensations, of our individual perception of reality.

The third level of reality, also nonconsensual, is called essence level. It is the level of unity, where all polarities fall together. It is the realm where we are no longer separate from each other or the things that surround us. Getting connected to the essence level is the goal of meditation and mindfulness (Bünger, 2010). The *Dao De Jing* expresses the unfathomable quality of that reality level in that the Dao that can be said, is not the eternal Dao. It is the level of direct awareness. Words cannot express its quality (Mindell, 2000, p. 41). We all have access to this essence level. In our Western world, however, we have learned to trust more in words and language than in other forms of describing our reality. In my diploma thesis I call this primate or rational thinking (Bünger, 2010). In other cultures, like the indigenous Aborigine culture of Australia, other levels of reality are considered equally real. Brain researcher Jill Bolte Taylor (2009) describes in her vivid report of her brain stroke how our right hemisphere always has access to the essence:

I understood that at the most elementary level, I am fluid. Of course I am fluid! Everything around us, about us, among us, within us, and between us is made up of atoms and molecules vibrating in space. . . . My left hemisphere had been trained to perceive myself as a solid, separate from others. Now, released from that restrictive circuitry, my right hemisphere relished in its attachment to the eternal flow. I was no longer isolated and alone. (p. 69)

A graphic illustrates the three levels (see Figure 2).

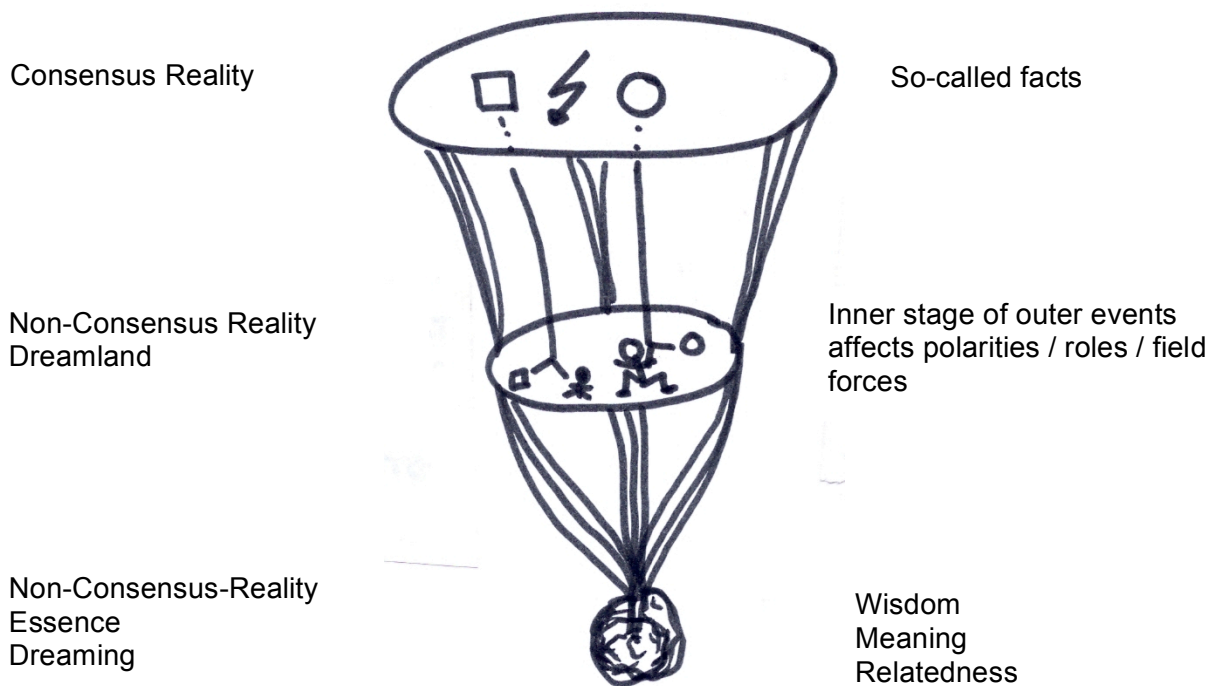


Figure 2. Levels of reality (Mindell, 2002, p. 31), drawing and add-ons by author.

Mindell says it is through marginalizing these other levels of awareness in our daily life, that we feel isolated, insecure, and loose orientation. Our deepest irrational mind does not doubt. It simply is (Mindell, 2007, p. 81).

Inner work. To bridge the gaps between the different levels of awareness, Mindell and his colleagues developed various methods of inner work that give access to information on the deeper levels of reality, to find new and creative ways to deal with disturbances in our inner and outer environment. These methods help to integrate marginalized parts and in doing so increase our capacity for action in difficult situations and moments in life. The methods that work on a deep level of awareness, named by Mindell (2007) as “Earth-Based Psychology,” help to root us deeply in ourselves as well as in the world as it is, thus connecting us with our undestroyed strengths, as Herman calls them in her description of trauma recovery (Herman, 1997, p. 192). Moreover, by practicing these methods, we might get

connected to the un-destroyable strength in us that Joe Goodbread (2010) calls “inalienable power.”

In my diploma thesis I describe in depth the evolution of these methods and how they are related to change processes and the theory and research of mindfulness (Bünger, 2010). I showed how Process-Oriented inner work practices fulfill the criteria of mindfulness practices. The practice of mindfulness meditation and its benefits to our mental and physical health has been thoroughly researched in the last two decades. It has been shown that mindfulness practices change the functioning of our brain and have a comprehensive integrating capacity (Siegel, 2007). The collaboration between the two hemispheres (therefore the implicit and explicit processing of memory) augments and fosters creativity and the sense of meaning in life. Interestingly, there is a movement towards processing in the left hemisphere, causing an attitude of engagement instead of avoidance. The integration of the functions in our prefrontal cortex, called neuronal integration, increases flexibility, our capacity for empathy, and self-regulation of one’s mind. Through the practice of inner work we feel better in relationships, we can change attitudes that have been forged by our experiences, we come to be more flexible and creative, and have an increased sense of meaning. Siegel (2008) defines the mind as process, regulating the flow of energy and information. Since the beginning of Process Work, Mindell and others investigated and developed inner work techniques that are accessible to a wide range of people in a wide range of situations, not only when sitting in a quiet room on a meditation cushion.

Mindell (2007) calls the essence level of our own personality, where all of our parts fall together into one, the Big-U, distinguishing it from the small me’s that form the diversity of our constructivist identity. The small me’s can be in conflict with each other, and the Big-U, holding all the parts, gives a broader perspective, and helps to facilitate between them. We will see later how this can be experienced in the context of trauma transformation. The so-called Process Mind is the intelligence of self-

organization that stands behind our life. It is the field intelligence that moves us along the core direction of our life, the direction of the Big-U. It is related to the mythical level of our life experience, the life myth of Jungian psychology. The life myth can be seen as the symbolic formulation of that path (L. Vassilou, A. Mindell, email conversation). In the context of the life myth we can see our life as the journey of a hero, having to confront diverse obstacles, having to fight dragons and other monsters, and we can find essential meaning in what we do and experience.

It is important in the context of trauma that none of these levels of reality is valued more than the other. The level of consensus reality is in general much more addressed in our Western society than the other two levels. Not only in transforming the high level of energy involved in the traumatic experience, addressing it on the essence level can be psychologically life saving, because the sentient realm in us provides us with an inner spaciousness, in which we can hold the most disturbing feelings. We become able to detach in a positive way, seeing that we have these emotions, but our whole being is more than that.

Field aspects. Anything that happens to us is happening in a social field. The term "field" has its origins in physics where it was used to describe a phenomenon where you could see that something happens but not the agent who made it happen, e.g., you can see the magnetic field in action when you hold a magnet under a piece of paper filled with metal shavings. The shavings align themselves into patterns by means of an invisible force. Kurt Levin, a Gestalt psychologist, transferred field theory into psychology and the applied social studies. The social field can be experienced in the roles and polarities it creates.

Role theory is an interdisciplinary concept of the self found in sociology, social psychology, anthropology, and some psychotherapies. While each discipline has its own definition of roles, all views more or less share the perspective that self, identity and behavior are shaped, influenced, and constructed through interaction with others, and through social norms and expectations. (. . .) A role can be defined as a unit of behavior with social meaning. (Diamond, n.d., p. 5)

Further,

Process Work theory does not distinguish theoretically between a role in a group and a role in an individual's inner world, such as a dream figure. While roles are found in groups and relationship, dream figures are found in nighttime dreams, body experiences, projections, complexes, and other subjective experiences. Both roles and dream figures are understood as part of a larger field, as functional sub-sets of behaviors and identities, arising out of deep feelings and experiences."

(Diamond, n.d., p. 7)

Deep Democracy and eldership. Worldwork is a community building process that tries to hear all voices and bring out all roles, including the ones that are normally disavowed in society or the identity of the given group. Mindell called the attitude of the facilitators and participants that make such a process possible "Deep Democracy," and the role that goes along with it is called eldership. The term "Deep Democracy" emphasizes a democratic process that goes beyond the dictate of the majority. The term "eldership" refers to indigenous cultures where the elder is a wise person holding the wisdom of the community. In Worldwork that role can be taken by any participant in the group, regardless of his or her social rank, gender, age and so forth. The role is also not attached to one person only. As with other roles, it needs various persons to unfurl.

Deep Democracy trusts in the expression of all three levels of reality, it supports the speakable messages as well as the ones that cannot yet be put in words and the ones that can never be put in words at all.

A Process-Oriented Approach to Trauma

First I want to explore trauma in the context of the three reality levels. They are consensus reality, dreamland, and essence.

Consensus reality level. It is only since 1980 that PTSD has been an accepted diagnosis. Beforehand there was not a scientific and medical consensus as to what trauma is. The diagnostic criteria for PTSD create consensus reality (Goodbread, 2009, p. 44). The diagnosis of PTSD, however, does not identify the cause of the symptoms and the cause of the "Disorder" cannot be healed. The

damage has been done. All symptoms are reactions to the initial damage. As to the cause of the damage there is still a lot of diversity in how it is seen in our society.

Let me show this in the example of rape. There is still a position, which does not acknowledge a victim of rape as being an innocent victim of violence. There is often still a doubt and view that she might have provoked or even wanted “it.” The position is not as popular as it might have been, but it still resides in our heads. Even in my head! I remember myself having been angry with one of our female students at school, who had been molested in one of Zurich’s city woods during a school sports event. She had been wearing shorts and a tight T-shirt on her nicely shaped body. How could she? Well, in thinking so, I accepted the fact that her wearing those kinds of clothes made it acceptable for some man to molest her. Of course in my role of teacher and therefore my feeling of being responsible for her, coupled with my own experience of being a female in this world, my position is understandable. It is with good intentions that I want to tell her: “protect yourself, make yourself as ugly as you can when you are on your own—or be as gruff as you can to anyone you meet.” On the other hand, in this position I contribute to a common worldview, that accepts abuse of woman and men as “normal.” Rapist and victim are common roles in our society, and still seldom is this talked about. The rapist is always someone that is not me. We read in the Yellow press about “these” people, and about what happened. I, personally, have the privilege to live in an environment where I can minimize the risk of being raped, but still am aware of the possibility that it might happen. The role of the rapist in my Swiss mainstream society is a ghost. He exists as photograph in a Yellow paper, or as an image in a news show where he is brought to court. But for most of us, he is not a person to engage with. He should be punished, yes, but we do not really want to hear about it. We also do not want to hear about the victim. Herman (1997) reports a case where a young woman who

had been raped had to change houses because she was treated like a leper at her school. Her classmates and other peers would not talk to her any more.

Amnesty reports a case in Indonesia, where a 19 year old, who had been raped by her employer, had to move to another village with her family.

when people in Rhaya's village learned she was pregnant as a result of rape, the people, including the head of village, said that they could not welcome her condition. Being pregnant without a husband, they said, would bring "Aib"—shame—to the village. (Amnesty International, n.d.)

Last week I saw a TV-crime show featuring German Afghanistan veterans.

The theme of post traumatic stress disorder was played out in the group of four soldiers one of whom had committed a crime of passion. After the show there was a TV-discussion. In the discussion a German female doctor who had done service in Afghanistan and who was herself experiencing symptoms of PTSD said, that the German general public did not want to hear about what is happening in Afghanistan. It is OK to have a political position against or for the military deployment of the German army but nobody wants to speak with the soldiers personally about their opinions and experiences when they come back. Similar attitudes have been reported from Vietnam veterans in Herman (1997).

Susan Clancy, Research Director of the Center for Women's Advancement, Development and Leadership at INCAE, an international think tank founded by Harvard Business School and USAID, criticizes the way trauma therapy is seen in our medical consensus. In her research at Harvard University she interviewed many people, both women and men, who had been sexually abused in their childhood. She found that much of the harm that stems from abuse is due to how society describes trauma and how it is treated medically.

In addition, they place the locus of harm related to sexual abuse entirely with the victim. Either they were impaired to begin with or were directly and immediately impaired because of emotional overload at the time of abuse, due to the neurobiologically toxic levels of fear and horror they felt. The cause of the harm has to do with nothing other than the victim and the abuse—family, professionals and society all fall out as passive spectators to a victimcentric theory that locates, either directly or indirectly, the source of the problem within the individual. What are the practical consequences of such a

theory? Not only can we avoid confronting sexual abuse face on, but we do not have to feel badly about it. Whatever is damaging victims has nothing to do with us; blame rests entirely with circumstances beyond our control, circumstances that we are not responsible for. (Clancy, 2009, p. 198)

This critique is as radical as it is intriguing. Trauma is treated within the context of psychotherapy. Psychotherapy is a Western paradigm that focuses on the individual (or on groups that are formed by individuals with the same experience). In his book *Living at the Edge*, process-oriented therapist and worldworker Joe Goodbread (2009), points out that psychotherapy has a socially normative function:

In focusing on the client's experience as a private, internal phenomenon, psychotherapy generally helps the client cope with his own experience, rather than to apply this experience toward modifying the social matrix of which he is a part. This leads to the accusation that psychotherapy can be socially regressive, in the sense of stifling social change by helping its clients adapt to a flawed society. (p. 46)

In quoting economist John Kenneth Galbraith, Clancy describes the mentality of a mainstream society not willing to take a closer look at the roles of victim and perpetrator in the context of trauma inflicted by humans on others.

People associate truth with convenience, with what most closely accorded with self-interest and personal well-being, what promised best to avoid awkward efforts or unwelcome dislocation of life. We find highly acceptable what contributes most to personal self-esteem. What we like to believe is not what is true but what is simple, convenient, comfortable, and comforting. (Clancy, 2010, p. 199)

Goodbread and Clancy both criticize how treatment of trauma and psychological disorder stays mostly with the victim, on the intrapersonal level, leaving the work to the victim relieving us all from the burden of engaging with these difficult matters which could potentially lead to social change. In my literature research on trauma healing, only Herman (1997) focused on the social level of the traumatization.

I am aware that I am entering into a much broader discussion that might have to happen. The Process Work approach would be to foster this discussion. It is important that we speak about the implicit norms we rely on and to make them visible. In a way one could say society is dissociated as whole from the suffering of trauma victims as well as from the violence of the perpetrators. A worldwork group

process could be a tool to bring all the positions into the open: the perpetrator, the victim, the bystander, and the one that engages in the cause to change our attitudes towards violence and to make our society a safer place, and to raise awareness about the mechanisms of trauma in the collective.

Dreamland level. That brings me to the second level of dream figures and roles. The basic roles I see in the context of trauma are the victim, the perpetrator, the (noninvolved) bystander, the (involved) witness, and the protector (often a ghost).

The roles I have defined are outer roles in society, and they are roles in the inner theatre of every victim (and perpetrator). No one role is attached to one person. Process Work goes even further in saying that all these roles can be found as an intrapersonal part of each of us, because we are humans and because we live on this planet and cocreate the reality we live in.

This paper has its focus on intrapersonal trauma transformation. So what role do these roles play in that context? Process Work sees integration as the integration of all these roles in oneself, bringing them into the light of awareness instead of marginalizing them. By integrating these roles the trauma survivor gets back the full range of his or her human experience and her capacities of action, being able to enjoy life and take the action needed to create her or his safety, as well as to engage fully in their social life.

In the following, I will give a short overview on the meaning of these roles. Further on I'll explore the core roles more in depth.

The victim. This might be the role that is more primary to the trauma survivor, but this does not have to be the case. First, because we have seen that a few people do not know about the initial trauma experience any more. Second, because even if they know, knowing intellectually and really acknowledging the fact internally are two completely different things. Goodbread (1997) describes the phenomenon of the edge to the primary process. Prior, I have explained the edge between primary and secondary process. The edge to the primary process

describes the phenomenon of knowing something about myself, even being able to say “I am a white person.” Or “I am a victim of rape,” but still not fully owning it, not being fully identified with it. For me, crossing that edge is the first stage of trauma recovery. I’ll explain my reasoning more deeply later on.

The perpetrator. On the interpersonal level of trauma the perpetrator is most present. On the intrapersonal level, however, the perpetrator’s energy is the most secondary role in the whole scene. The trauma survivor experiences this energy in her symptoms and disturbances every day. What Levine (1998) describes as the energy of a tornado in the body in the aftermath of trauma experiences can be seen as the perpetrator’s energy. It is frozen in reaction to the trauma and no longer available. To unfreeze that power and to make it useful again for the person who experiences it only as something that happened to her, is one of the core goals of trauma transformation, and one of the most delicate tasks. Not integrated, this energy will linger in the realm of the secondary and cause many irritations, not only for the trauma survivor herself but also in her relationships, as we will see. This might be the most important process in the whole recovery process.

The (noninvolved) bystander. This is part of the psyche of a trauma survivor as it shows in her environment. In talking about her experience as if she was not there, she detaches from her own suffering. She experiences that detachment in herself and she experiences it in relationship to others. People might not believe her, or they might believe her but are unable to feel with her, people might not want to hear anything, and so forth. One could say this role is created by dissociation. The role of the bystander is to be transformed into the role of the witness.

The (involved) witness. On the contrary, this is the one that listens and shares the emotional burden as well as the responsibility of engagement in the process of restitution. In the context of trauma treatment this role is often occupied

first by the therapist. But to me it is of utmost importance that this role is developed as an inner resource. The witness is the part in us that is not fully involved; it has a form of detachment while simultaneously being compassionate with the parts that are involved, entangled, struggling, sad, or blitheful. I contrast that witness role to the detachment of the bystander that is not compassionate and reaffirms the trauma, as I have shown above. The witness has a connection to the Buddhist observer, the place of unconditional friendship, as it is called in Tibetan Buddhism.

Learning how to be kind to ourselves, learning how to respect ourselves, is important. The reason it's important is that, fundamentally, when we look into our own hearts and begin to discover what is confused and what is brilliant, what is bitter and what is sweet, it is not just ourselves that we are discovering. We're discovering the universe. (Chödrön, 1997, p. 100)

From that place of witnessing, we can finally discover that we do not have to be wrapped up in the trauma history, that we are more alike anybody else than we thought.

We begin to find that, to the degree that there is bravery in ourselves—the willingness to look, to point directly at our hearts—and to the degree that there is kindness toward ourselves, there is confidence that we can actually forget ourselves and open to the world. (Chödrön, 1997, p. 101)

Developing the role of the witness frees the trauma survivor from the trauma consequences of constriction and disconnection. The witness is deeply compassionate with the victim part while believing in the power of the survivor and her fundamental connection to the world.

The protector. This is the role that is definitely missing in the scene of trauma. There was nobody there to protect the victim from harm. If this experience is then generalized, the trauma survivor thinks that there is no protection ever and that he has to defend himself always on his own. This can lead to a defensive warrior mentality that does not trust in anybody or only in a few finely selected people. Protection seems to be close to the identity, thus primary, but it is still fed by the experience of deficit. It is fed by the experience of injustice and by hypervigilance, always expecting the worst while not really trusting in one's own

ability of self-defense. The protector role is one to be nourished in the process of trauma transformation. It is closely connected to establishing safety, finding inner and outer resources to cope with the challenges of life and relationships, and beginning to trust again. It involves at once an inward and an outward movement.

Feeling protected in our generally unsafe world is a privilege, is spiritual power or spiritual rank as Processwork calls it. Sometimes the feeling of this rank comes through the process of realizing that one has survived. There must have been a protective power in the background to face this tremendous threat. For some people the connection to that spiritual source is so strong that they believe that God has sent this challenge to educate them and they consent to it.

As long as this spiritual power stays secondary, meaning far away from our identity, it might irritate other people, who think the person is withdrawn or arrogant, while the trauma survivor herself feels lonely in her experience, giving her reason to withdraw even more. It's a vicious circle. Realizing his or her own power, and the force that has helped them to survive, connects the person to her mythical ground, to the deeper source of her life, that C. G. Jung called the life myth (Bünger, 2010). It connects the person to her inalienable power (Goodbread, 2010). Connecting to that deep source of inalienable power can actually be trained. Mindell developed methods of inner work near the essence level that foster that connection. I'll talk more about that in the next section and in the case material.

A Process-Oriented View of Trauma Symptoms

Dissociation, intrusion, and parallel worlds. Mindell (2007) describes the different forms of our existence as "parallel worlds," a concept from quantum physics. In quantum physics "parallel worlds" is the name for all possible, and not exactly determinable, states and positions of electrons. All of these exist before they can be observed. Parallel worlds exist independently from each other and are nonlocal (p. 41).

I find the concept of parallel worlds highly suitable for the context of trauma. What is called dissociation can be seen as a parallel world, where the victim does not experience the threat and hurt of the other parallel world of the traumatic experience. In the aftermath of trauma, the triggered state of intrusion, of falling back into the traumatic experience may it be in pictures or in feelings, can be seen as one parallel world that is as real as the experience of the person who copes with life quite well, the world of the person who is able to metacommunicate about her inner and outer experiences. Many different experiences and inner roles can be perceived as parallel worlds. In the context of neurobiology, the concept of parallel worlds compares to the concept of neuronal networks that have been built by the different experiences in life. Storch and Riedener (2005) emphasize the modular quality of our brain, how our experiences are stored in our implicit memory.

The image of parallel worlds fits perfectly with the experience of being triggered. The past experience of trauma exists in a parallel world that shows itself through intrusions. When that happens it feels as if we were beamed into a parallel world. From one moment to the other, we find ourselves in a totally different inner environment, often in an environment of fear and stress. In general I can interpret all the varied experiences of my daily experience, of my different identities or roles, as parallel worlds. What I like about this interpretation that is takes away the pathological quality, the implicit valuation of the word "dissociation." It puts the emphasis on the fact that the traumatic experience is one of many worlds that I live in. In every parallel world we experience ourselves in an identity that Mindell calls "small u," or what I referred to earlier as "small me's."

Quantum physicist Richard Feynman (1992) shows in his Quantum Electrodynamics (QED) that all the different possible paths of the various light quanta sum up (through vector addition) to the one path that is observable. When we learn in school that light spreads in a straight line, this straight line is the sum of all possible paths that the photons are actually heading for. The photons try all possible

paths. What we see is the result of a vector addition, the superposition of all probabilities that are expressed by vectors in the mathematical model.

In analogy Mindell defines the “Big U” as the superposition of all our parallel worlds, of all our “small u’s.” The “Big U” is the flow that underlies our life. It comprises all our parts, as contradictory as they may be, and joins them together to the experience of one (Bünger, 2010). The “Big U” is our personal experience of the essence level. On this level our contradicting experiences all have meaning. We experience inner conflict and marginalization only on the Dreamland level of reality. On the Essence level, there is no marginalization.

In analogy to the mathematical model, Mindell developed inner work methods using our innate sense of earth directions. Each parallel world has its own direction that can be concretely walked in space (vector walk). Summing up the different paths in a vector addition results in the experience of the “Big U.” In walking the “Big U”-vector we have access to a level of integration instead of disconnection. It is an experience that is close to the language of our implicit memory, a language of body sensations, images, and feelings. It is also a level that could be named as positive dissociation (Reddemann, 2008), allowing an experience of inner spaciousness and of creativity that holds all our experiences.

Reenactment and the paradigm of Process and Process Mind. As we have seen in the literature review, Levine (1998) and Herman (1997) see reenactment of the traumatic event as an attempt at self-healing. Reenactment means to experience parts of the traumatic event and the involved energies in behavior, images, and emotions. Intrusions and Flashbacks are one form of reenactment. Another form is to encounter outer situations where trauma survivors are confronted in some way with the same kind of energy, situations that beam them, so to say, into the parallel world of the trauma. In the paradigm of “process” that somewhat enigmatic fact makes a lot of sense. If (in the interpretation of Levine)

trauma is the experience of frozen energy, of an interrupted process of letting that energy flow, there is a process in the background to bring that energy into flowing again. In the model of Process Work, there is a form of intelligence at work that pushes us to find integration. Mindell calls that intelligence, that organizing principle, "Process Mind." It is the intelligence behind the "Big U" direction. The concept of Process Mind reframes the experience of reenactment as being due to an intelligence that strives for integration and growth, instead of suffering.

Mindell has developed methods of inner work that are powerful enough to deal with even the most triggered states, where we confront inner annihilation, suicidal states, states of hopelessness, states of desperation. The Process Mind can be accessed through our body, finding a place in our body of our deepest self, and connecting it to a place on earth that mothers the specific energy of this deep body sensation. From that space that is also essential to us, we can facilitate between the most difficult affects and the part of ourselves that is threatened by them. I have explored the effects of that kind of inner work in depth (Bünger, 2010). In triggered states, the Process Mind gives us a somewhat sober state of mind, from which we can see the present experience as a matter-of-fact without the valuation of illness or victimhood. It can be seen as part of a general human experience.

Process Mind awareness connects us to that inalienable power in us described in the previous section. It fosters a perspective of unity instead of separation. It is also a powerful tool to free us from the impact of the triggered emotions in our body and to find a place in us that is calm and detached. From that place in us, we are able to find new ways of dealing with the emotional states and the outer situations. Having access to the Process Mind can become a daily practice and spiritual training, getting a deeper understanding of the directions the process of trauma transformation yields to.

The concept of the Process Mind is a teleological approach to any experience of our life, including drastic events like trauma, instead of the causal approach, that

sees the trauma symptoms only in the light of the initial hurt, that cannot be undone. The latter perspective sees the trauma survivor always as victim, as strong as she might have gotten. The intriguing aspect of the concept of the Process Mind lies in its individuality. The wisdom of the Process Mind stems from the body wisdom of the very person who suffers from the triggered symptoms. It's nothing that has been imposed from the outside. In my experience a wide range of people easily access that level of awareness. It does not need the context of psychotherapy. It needs practice and encouragement to trust in its messages.

When we are experiencing the level of the Process Mind, its messages are clear and immediate. It's a body intelligence close to implicit processing. Once we come back to our rational minds, we might think the message is stupid or useless. That is a normal process due to the different systems of processing. Mindell compares it to the physical principle of uncertainty, postulated by Heisenberg: "We cannot know, as a matter of principle, the present in all its details" (as cited in Mindell, 2007, p. 81). Mindell applies the uncertainty principle to the different levels of reality. When we concentrate on one level of reality we temporarily lose contact with the other levels. If we come out of a unifying experience to the level of rational thinking, discrimination must be the natural counter principle. The message from the essence level cannot be immediately understood rationally. It needs a time of integration, of facilitation between the different levels of reality. For me this is another form of describing the integration of the implicit and the explicit memory system. Further, this kind of integrating of experiences that connects different forms of our intelligence—rational, emotional, sensational, and transpersonal intelligence—fosters an attitude that Mindell calls "Deep Democracy," an attitude that does not prefer in principle one kind of intelligence to the other. We will encounter the term Deep Democracy and its implications again when I explore the connection between trauma transformation and facilitator development.

Freezing and edge work. The edge lies between the primary and the secondary process as we have seen before. It is informed by our beliefs. It guards the limits of what we call our identity in everyday life. In trauma theory as presented beforehand, the primary identity is challenged by the traumatic experience, sometimes damaged. The degree of that challenge or damage depends on the circumstances of the traumatic experience and the resources of the person who experiences it. The more fragile the sense of identity (e.g., developing identity in children), the more difficult the integration of a traumatic event. The energy that challenges the primary process is the energy of the reaction to the trauma that is frozen. Integrating the secondary process of the trauma means integrating that frozen energy. The primary process, closer to our rational mind, considers that energy as dangerous and thus interrupts the natural impulse to complete the process and release that energy (Levine, 1998). Thus we could say that at the edge between the primary and the secondary process, we freeze again.

Freezing is a process that happens at the edge. Freezing goes along with an experience of dissociation or parallel worlds as presented in the previous section. We are no longer “here.” Freezing can be detected from the outside by a dense atmosphere. It is an altered state of mind. Process Work theory says that if we slow down the process of freezing, going back to the last moment of energy, exploring thoroughly what happens, slowly the edge can be moved. In slowing down the process we get a chance to find the missing information that leads to the meaning of what is happening.

At the edge we can find the resources to deal with what happens to us. For example the (inner or outer) voice that does not want us to reexperience the enormous amount of energy unfiltered, is a voice that wants to protect us. We do indeed need protection to make the process of integration safe. In exploring the voices that come up at the edge, we negotiate what kind of protection we need and how we can implement it. In negotiating between the different voices or dream

figures, we find words to our experience and we find ways to facilitate inner diversity. The place from which we can facilitate is a place that is not identified with either experience. It could be interpreted as the observer role that is able to metacommunicate about the experiences. From this perspective it is possible to find a narrative of my experience that makes sense. I can communicate with the parts of myself that are terrified. I can become the real protector of that victim in me. I can support a conscious warrior identity that is striving for regaining her whole self.

In process-oriented group work the group can be seen as one being that has a primary and secondary process of its own. The edge to the secondary process is experienced in the group atmosphere, it might be agitation or it might be a frozen moment, where nobody dares to speak. Lane Arye and Arlene Audergon report an experience with a mixed group of Serbs, Croats, and Muslims in postwar Croatia in 1996 (Audergon & Arye, 2006). It was the first time that Croats, Serbs, and Muslims met to speak about the war. The atmosphere was dense. People reported that it was dangerous for them to even be there. Although everybody was there to speak about the war, it was extremely difficult to touch the issue:

When any issue about the war was touched, a silence came over the group like a low, chilling fog. We learned quickly not to try to forge ahead in this fog, but also not to be swallowed in it. Moving too quickly could be dangerous, re-triggering acute symptoms of trauma. (p. 138)

This is a fabulous image, of the attitude around the edge, not to forge ahead and not allowing oneself to be swallowed in it. The voice emerging from the fog was the one that said: "Do not talk about the war Do not talk about what divides you (p. 138). The primary process of that group was to be kind and to discuss only humanitarian issues. "We are all humanitarians here. We like each other. We are not the intolerant ones who created the conflict" (p. 138). For the group as well as for the individual, the energy of the perpetrator, in that case the enemy, or the warlord, was secondary. The group was

disturbed by the underlying conflicts that they feared could escalate, which was already apparent in their signals (separating into ethnic groups during breaks) and in the tense atmosphere between them. The tension in our group was a small mirror of the tension in people's communities, which appeared both in generalized depression and in occasional violent outbreaks. To begin a process of reconciliation and rebuilding within communities, there needed to be a way to talk about what happened at an individual and community level, without inflaming further violence. (Audergon & Arye, 2006, p. 138)

That is the edge work. Telling one's own story is, as we have seen, a part of trauma healing (Herman, 1997). On a collective level it is hearing the stories of individual experiences that people of all sides of the conflict bring into the room. If the individual experience can be heard, there is a chance that the relationship becomes more fluid again, creating connection instead of disconnection. Speaking about the unspeakable is the edge to be crossed.

When someone [a woman] said the unspeakable in the most subtle way imaginable "I'm a little more comfortable with my own group"—the stories and mistrust that divided them spilled out. . . . The "divisiveness" appeared also in their emotional distance from their own traumatic experience and from each other. This was expressed in the accusation: "You keep us at a distance." (Audergon & Arye, 2006, p. 140)

In admitting the truth of the accusation, the woman brought the group in touch with the pain of being cut off, not only from each other but also from one's own emotions and memories.

Disconnection and marginalization. Dissociation, as we have seen before, causes a sense of intrapersonal and interpersonal disconnection. In process work terms this could be described as marginalization. The trauma is so overwhelming and complex that it cannot be integrated. Important parts of the experience are marginalized, that is, moved far away from our awareness. To keep up some form of identity in a situation of total threat to the identity, the brain tries to make sense of the situation by taking in only the parts that somehow fit into one another, leaving the rest outside. That is at first a wise survival strategy. However, marginalization amplifies the feeling of being disconnected, as parts of our personality that we need are now threatening our personality. It is a paradoxical situation. Reintegrating

these parts, means confronting the initial threat, because it was in that situation of threat that the marginalization was created. Threat and fear stand at the edge to integration, so to say.

Trauma energy. The process-oriented interpretation of the trauma energy is that of a secondary process. The goal is integration of that secondary process. That goal is similar to the goals of trauma healing as expressed by the authors that I have read. What I find different, however, is the way of framing this integration. Seeing the experience of trauma as a challenge to find our inalienable power connected to our life myth may not simplify the process of integration, but it gives a sense of meaning that goes beyond personal history. It enables us to find what Watzlawik, Weakland, and Fish (1974/2005) call solutions of a second order, which step out of the initial system of belief that sees me as a victim of trauma. In creating my own rules and interpretations of the event, nourished from a Process Mind perspective, I have a chance to regain my personal power inch by inch and rewrite my own past and future. The obstacle I have to encounter on this journey is the perpetrator's (or trauma) energy that I have marginalized in myself. It is condensed in what Mindell calls inner oppression. Unconsciously we flip between the victim and the perpetrator role in an infinite game (Watzlawik et al., 1974/2005). It is a natural role switch from one polarity to the other (Mindell, 2007, p. 183). As long as we do not know the rules of the game we are doomed to play it. Once we have switched to the level of the rule maker, we are never the same. Even when the process still has a long way to go, it will be nourished by the perspective of a life journey towards inner freedom and inalienable power.

Recovery From a Process-Oriented Perspective

I have had the privilege to have some conversations with Emetchi, faculty member of the Process Work Institute in Portland (OR), process-oriented trauma researcher, and my study committee member, about her findings that are soon to be

published, and she granted me permission to use her theoretical framework in this paper.

A process-oriented definition of trauma. According to Emetchi, the process-oriented definition of interpersonal trauma is to be seen in a continuum of misuse of greater power over the other. On one side of the continuum we find *downing*, where the person on the receiving end can still defend herself. *Abuse* is the unfair use of higher rank where a person cannot defend herself. *Trauma* is situated on the other end of the continuum, considered as a violation of the integrity of the person on the receiving end that renders her utterly overpowered and helpless.

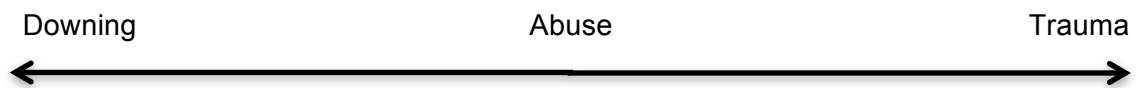


Figure 3. Trauma on the continuum of power misuse.

Regarding trauma as an extreme of rank abuse sheds a new light on the topic. It emphasizes the fact that we all carry the potential of the role of the perpetrator in ourselves. We might not go to the extremes, but we all know experiences where we put somebody down or took advantage of privileges to the disadvantage of others. In the role of the (uninvolved) bystander, this concept reminds us of our personal responsibilities. If we marginalize the roles of the perpetrator and therefore the role of the victim in ourselves, we might contribute to an unsafe environment, as I have talked about beforehand.

Trauma transformation process versus recovery. The teleological process-oriented model of primary and secondary process has a radical implication: the importance for any victim of abuse and trauma to eventually pick up the bits of perpetrator energy in her- or himself. This model, as counterintuitive as it might seem, carries an enormous potential for transformation and empowerment. It goes along with Herman's central goals of recovery: empowerment and connection.

The concept of recovery comes from a state-oriented viewpoint. I have been ill (state 1) and now I am recovered, I am not ill any more (state 2). That this concept cannot be true in the context of trauma is obvious: The initial harm cannot be undone. Herman (1997) says the recovery process is never finished. Even if she tries to frame it in a positive way, as illustrated in the literature review, that is a depressing perspective to any survivor of trauma.

In response to that perspective, I propose the term of trauma transformation, emphasizing the teleological aspect of process as stated by Emetchi. Is growth ever finished? One can become finished, however, with the state or experience of victimization being dominant and dominating in the fabric of one's life. Trauma transformation is an ongoing process leading from frozenness to reconnecting to the flowing nature of life, empowering us to become our fully selves, and yes, this process is ongoing. It becomes a way of engaging with life.

Three stages of trauma transformation. Emetchi formulates three stages of transformation. These stages are not meant as fixed steps that come one after the other. Rather, they are an extrapolation of an all-over journey of trauma transformation. They are a perceptual map for orientation in the transformation process of oneself or other persons. The three stages are as follows, according to Emetchi.

Knowing the primary process of the trauma. This has two parts. First comes the work with the victimized part, the primary process, the part that is wounded, and clearly separated from the abuser. It includes providing safety, both external as well as internally developing a set of tools that enable a person to prove to themselves that they can create safety from the inside out. Then asking, "What has brought you through this experience? How come that you are still here?" connects us to the more secondary sense of the survivor, and to the capacity of inner safety that has been there all along.

Seeing the person as a victim only cuts her or him off the parts that are thriving at the very moment, or cuts off the resources of resilience he or she must have had to even be here at the moment, in spite of everything that happened, and therefore adds to disempowerment and disconnection. It is profoundly disempowering as well to trash the victim, because it is essential that we attend to the hurt, develop compassion, and find ways to provide safety for ourselves and others.

How does Emetchi's process of transformation, connection, and empowerment compare to Herman's (1997) three stages of recovery: safety, remembrance and mourning, and reconnection? That is the question I am going to address next. Besides the perspective of the theoretical thinker, I bring in my personal experience of the stages of transformation.

I have been a victim of severe neglect over a long period of time during my childhood and youth. My parents grew up in the Germany of WWII. My father was part of Hitler's latest cannon fodder, sent to war at the age of 15 in 1943 and held in war captivity for 2 years in France. He had been the son of wealthy parents in the eastern part of Germany. After the war, nothing was left of their wealth, and his parents both died in the early 1950s. My mother also grew up in a wealthy family in western Germany. Because of her beautiful blond hair she was a role model of Hitler's race ideology and had to show herself in the big parades of the Nazi youth movement, although she hated it. I do not know much more about her experience.

In my family we rarely ever talked about the war and when it was spoken of, it was only about negligibilities (at least in my eyes). Maybe because of that, the history of WWII and all the atrocities of Hitler's dictatorship, the compliance of the German citizens, and the stories of its victims have been an obsession for me since I could read. At the same time I was always afraid to find out how my family was involved in them. As far as I know from my parents, my grandparents had been

trying to save their necks while at the same time being involved as little as possible. I definitely know that my grandparents had not been part of the resistance, but I do not know how far they had to comply with the policy of the dictatorship to save their jobs and provide relative safety to their families.

Victim energy and safety—crossing the edge to the primary process.

The first step for many, especially for victims of childhood abuse, might be to acknowledge the fact that something had been done to them that was wrong and hurtful for which they are not responsible. Making that step fully has a lot to do with safety. Acknowledging and identifying with the victim part can be accompanied by strong feelings and regression. Only when there is a safe environment that can hold us while experiencing these feelings, a safe home, and people around us that have the capacity to hold strong feelings while seeing us as whole, seeing the hurt part and the strong survivor, can we safely allow ourselves to amplify the experience of being a victim, finding in it the information we need. Truly acknowledging the victim part in us goes along with truly acknowledging the survivor as well, getting a first glimpse of the enormous power that stands behind that role.

Opening to the fact of being a victim of trauma is also an act of safety in itself. We reconnect to the vulnerable part that has been marginalized. This is the first step of integrating the role of the involved witness and of the protector.

In my own experience I remember the tremendous feeling of relief, when I realized what was “wrong” in me, which happened accidentally about 2 years ago while reading a book about memory and its connection to the body (Bauer, 2004/2007). In that book I read for the first time that neglect was considered a form of trauma. I cried for days because I finally found an explanation for all the strange and spooky things still happening in my inner environment, while being quite efficient and successful on the outside. For many years I had been fighting with and recovering from addiction, strong body symptoms, depressive symptoms, anxiety and so forth. Although I had been in therapy I was never diagnosed with PTSD,

maybe because of my general efficiency in life. But inside myself I was for a long time terribly afraid that one day I would no longer be able to keep up the appearance and not have enough strength to facilitate between my inner experience and the outer world, and be diagnosed as “crazy” and definitely “defective” and put away. Now that I am writing this down, I realize what a strange old-fashioned view of psychiatry that implies. Maybe it is because of the WWII background of my family and having lived as a child on my own with my mother in her untreated depression and alcohol addiction who would rather have killed herself than to go to a psychiatrist.

Now suddenly I “knew” what was “wrong.” Suddenly I got access to a part of me that had been hidden for a long time, the traumatized child. That child had been a lonely fighter for over 40 years, far away from my personal identity even though I knew my own history. I knew it intellectually. I could talk about my childhood experiences in a matter-of fact-way that was far away from any emotional experience, leaving any listener speechless, because the story and my state of consciousness were so incongruent. Now, in inner work, I could see that child, feel its fear, share its courage, experience its pain. It was the beginning of developing a sense of compassion for that past being whom I had marginalized before. I had marginalized it although I was able to talk about it. That is why I call this step crossing the edge of the primary process. It is one thing to know intellectually about the story and another to connect it with an inner experience.

In my case, the self-diagnosis was helpful. It was the beginning of understanding something that had been a riddle to my rational mind for so many years, the beginning of my research about trauma, and the beginning of the transformation process. I was also in a place of my personal development where I felt strong enough, I had a safe environment, and I was determined to confront

myself with what needed to be faced because I was in training to be a psychotherapist and a conflict facilitator.

Although Process Work has a teleological approach, assuming that every disturbance has a direction, that something secondary wants to be integrated, it does not imply that everybody has to lean into the most difficult experience in every circumstance and at any moment. The decision to open up to trauma transformation must stay with the person who experiences it. I agree with Herman (1997) and Emetchi (2009) when they say that the process of creating safety on a physical and emotional level may be the most important task for many years. In the background there may be the force of the self-organizing and self-healing process that finds the right time and place to lay the facts on the table as we say in German.

Victim energy and remembering. Becoming identified with the victim part of one's personality implies getting in contact with some of the feelings and memories that belong to that role. That is at once distressing and relieving; relieving, because it reconnects parts that have been dissociated from one another. The feelings, the images, and the story can be put together again. As painful as the process was for me, so too was it healing.

I totally agree with Herman and Rothschild about the importance of meaning, making sense of the whole experience. In my case, interestingly, it included my parents. Knowing about the consequences of trauma, it did not make sense any more to blame them. It was exactly as Herman describes it. I did not forgive them but I understood how they had not been capable of realizing the harm they were causing. In my early 20s I had desperately tried to get them to acknowledge their wrong, and I remember my father repeatedly saying to me that he did what he could. At the time I took that as a cheap excuse that inflamed my rage, but now I understand that he was totally right, and he was speaking not only for himself but also for my mother. My parents did not have the possibility, neither from the outside environment nor from the inside, to engage with what they really experienced during

the war. But I have that privilege. Perry (2006/2008) points out that blaming the parents of neglected children does not do any good. Rather, he suggests educating them to be better parents to their children, if possible. In my case that is not possible any more, but my mother posthumously finances my trainings. Sometimes I imagine her sitting somewhere on the other side, being proud of me and relieved and happy that I now invest her money into something useful.

Victim energy and mourning. Reconnecting with the victim and the survivor, and getting to know her feelings and memories, results in a process of mourning. There is a part of the past that cannot be restored. Acknowledging that fact allows one to let go. I see mourning as an altered state that also allows us to regroup memory and put emotions in the place where they belong. When I am crying, I am crying for that child in myself. This separation allows me to see who I am now, to honor the parts of myself that are competent and able to take initiative. That is a step in the direction to acknowledging survivor's strength as a positive part of my self instead of a pathological consequence of past hurt: "I had to be so strong because That is why I do not want to identify with my strength."

The function of diagnosis and the attitude of the researcher.

Diagnosis is the identification of a disease from its signs and symptoms, as well as identifying its nature or cause. . . . Diagnosis is used primarily for determining appropriate treatment and giving a prognosis for the further course of the disease. In addition it fulfills a secondary function that is more experiential than objective. Diagnosis makes sense of a collection of experiences that otherwise seem fragmented, even chaotic. (Goodbread, 2009, p. 173)

I have written about this secondary, experiential level of diagnosis beforehand. In his book, Joe Goodbread reports his reaction to the diagnosis of temporal lobe epilepsy that had gone along with disturbing altered states parallel to everyday consciousness and functioning. He describes the relief he had felt and the sense of coherence it brought back. Then he comes to the primary function of diagnosis: appropriate treatment. He refused to take the medication he was highly

recommended to take and chose to explore the “brain dysfunction” as if it was a “mysterious, spontaneously unfolding challenge to my usual identity” (p. 175).

When I read this passage, I thought, I did somewhat the same. From the moment I knew the context of my dis-ease (I find the word very adapted), I must have decided inside that I wanted to explore it to its depth, to go to its ground. I say that now, because that was what I did, seeing it from my current perspective. My trauma symptoms undermined my competence, my initiative, my trust in people, and my relationships to authorities. I wanted to know what happens and how it happens, and I wanted to try out other strategies to handle them. In the background of that decision probably stands my warrior mentality. I did not want to give in. I was proud. I thought I could face it now.

The difficulty with diagnoses is the stigma it can bring. In the context of trauma and PTSD, there is a lot of implicit stigma: some people can cope with trauma, have enough resilience, and the ones that break down are weaker. I had many discussions in the last few years with people who said it was unnecessary to suffer, and promoted methods that would relieve suffering without confronting the past. I did not buy into that point of view. It may have been my own unconscious pride of survival that nourished that thought: If the suffering did not make sense, then my life did not make sense, like the lives of so many others. But, on the other hand, I think, it is a natural process, described by Mindell (1991): We all have the natural tendency to amplify pain. When our head aches we push hard against it, thus amplifying the pain. We have a natural tendency to want to know more, to not only see the dis-ease, but the hidden information it holds, the promise of new found ease and freedom. Freedom is not the same as getting rid of something. On the contrary, getting rid of something might be done in marginalizing it and then its energy haunts us from a more hidden place. These ideas stood at the beginning of Process Work, and they are still mysterious and fascinating to me while I explore their truth.

In my case the journey of research was, as described by Herman and Rothschild, cognitive, emotional, and physical. One of the most important explorations was getting to know the different layers of fear. Understanding the Central Adaptation Syndrome of Hüther (1996) (explained in the literature review), gave me a whole new understanding of my fears and stress. Many of my steps in experimenting with new techniques of inner work, with leaning into the experiences as I call it, resulted in repeated altered states of fear or stress as one might also name it. Once I knew that fear accompanies learning, and that extreme fear goes along with loosening neuronal connections, opening up to new neuronal networks, I had a completely new frame for what was happening. I could allow myself to let go of the fear of the fear. I could allow myself to experience fear as it is, just fear . . . and I learned to live with it. It did not make it an easy ride. Strong stress is still strong stress. I got to know all the assumptions that I had made about myself. I got to know the depth of my self-hatred. I got to know how much I mistrusted everyone still when push comes to shove. The new frame emphasized the researcher in me. Like Jill Bolte Taylor (2009), who metacommented on her own stroke while experiencing it, I explored what was happening with me, my habitual reactions, amplifying them and gaining a new understanding of their meaning.

This is a project still in process. What made it possible was not only my safe environment and the privilege I had to make this personal growth process my priority, but much more important were the people around me in the Process Work community, my study committees, my teachers, my peers, in the MACFOC and in the Diploma programs, who shared these kind of attitudes, who taught me various methods of, and to trust in inner work, who witnessed my struggles and my successes, who gave me feedback and fought with me, who had the patience to sit with me in frozen states and the impatience to not believe only in my victim's identification.

Science has searched for a wonder-weapon against fear for a long time and finally found it by accident, Hüther (2005) says, maybe because it was so evident. In experiments with primates, set under threatening stress, the researchers observed that the fear wore off as soon as the animal had a friend at its side, another member of its family or group. When the two did not know each other beforehand, the effect was not observable. For us humans it is sometimes even enough to know that such a friend exists, on whose support we can rely. Relationships are fragile. They support us as much as they challenge us, and our (explicit and implicit) mind is powerful. In relying on the stories of others who have gone through change processes themselves, and who trust in the inner work methods and lead us along, we can learn to trust the deeper ground in ourselves and to stay in relationship even if it is difficult.

I have described one of the first research cycles in depth in my diploma thesis (Bünger, 2010) and embedded it in all the literature research I had done. What I can say so far is that the cycles of fear are getting shorter, the more practice I get. I am getting used to it, I know what is happening, I buy into the inner destructive messages for a shorter amount of time, and I am more and more able to distill the essential information out of them, which form my new projects of personal development. When I acknowledged the amount of self-hatred still residing in me, for example, I was very surprised, and it was clear to me that secondary to that there must be self-love. So I went on an “expedition” to find my own inner place of self-love and to nourish it. I committed myself to a training of (sentient) inner work in my MACFOC training, because I could see how much my self-hatred interfered with my skills and metaskills as a facilitator.

Metaskill is a word for the underlying feeling attitudes of one’s work; they inform the “how” of the application of the skills (Mindell, Amy, 1995). I had to be myself more fully to be able to facilitate; how could I be deeply democratic on the outside when I was not on the inside? The attitude of Deep Democracy meant for

me to even accept self-hatred as such, engaging with its messages and sorting out where there were useful voices of criticism, wanting to push me to my best, and where it was merely destructive. I will say more about that in the section about trauma and inner opposition. All that I am writing about here is at the edge to acknowledging the perpetrator energy. The researcher is a role that has distance from the victim role and it takes initiative, not submitting only to the frozen triggered states but also supporting the idea of process and flow.

I find a similar attitude in a text of Freud:

His illness must no longer seem to him contemptible but must become an enemy worthy of his mettle, a piece of his personality, which has solid ground for its existence, and out of which things of value for his future life have to be derived. (as cited in Herman, 1997, p. 175)

The perpetrator energy and inner oppression. Self-hatred could be seen as a symptom of internalized oppression. Mindell puts it in a greater context when he says

Most chronic self-criticism stems from the internalization of mainstream views. People put themselves down if they don't meet the standards of the local government, their religion, their school, or their social class. When self-critical people do inner work, they are apt to meet a figure who puts them down because they are not valuable in some culturally defined way: they have the wrong physical appearance, skin color, hair, health, race, religion, age, gender, occupation, training or economic status. The world and its value system dominate them internally. (Mindell, 1995, p. 38)

He sees the inner work on internalized oppression as political work.

Oppression is so pandemic—so common in your body, your friends and your environment—that you and others in your life may consider this uncomfortable state-of-mind normal. You may feel compelled to take tranquilizers or use drugs or drink to soothe these tensions. Such behavior inadvertently helps to maintain the world status quo of oppression.

In all cultures, many individuals are depleted by oppression. If you are a member of an overtly oppressed group, you can exhaust yourself dealing with your personal pain and fighting not only the mainstream but members in your group who are unconscious of oppression's effects. If you try to ignore inner and outer tensions, you may become an overeater, a workaholic or a sex addict, develop ulcers or find your immune system has weakened under stress.

If you are a non-mainstream person, you may experience so many pressures to conform, both from your counterculture group and the mainstream, that you decide to go into hiding as a quiet, average citizen.

If you are a mainstream person, so much of you is oppressed by your culture that you may feel invisible and have little energy to help others. (Mindell, 1995, p. 39)

In this quote I find the same inhibiting function of inner oppression that I experienced myself. Inner oppression is one of the intrusions of the perpetrator's energy on the auditory and proprioceptive level. If we have been treated like "shit", a part of us agrees with the message and thinks we are "shit." In the context of trauma, Mindell writes

When you cannot protect yourself from overt, covert or institutional abuse, you unwittingly internalize your attackers, adopt their style and accept their criticism. You belittle and repress yourself and end up feeling worthless without knowing why. After a while, you no longer notice the negative thoughts you have about yourself; you simply feel life is not worth living. You may think sometimes about suicide.

The internalized sense of domination, worthlessness and depression is aggravated by having to continue living in what feels like an unfair culture, with a government that is not conscious of what it does. I am thankful to my brother, Carl Mindell of Albany Medical School, for having shown the similarities between the symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder and the effects of long-term shaming and belittling. (Mindell, 1995, p. 108)

So, understanding the inner oppression as a consequence of the outer oppression, understanding in detail how it shapes our lives and the way we act or do not act, is a step in the direction of integrating the perpetrator's energy. If we do not see how our thinking and acting are shaped by its messages, we are likely to become what hurt us, thus to hurt ourselves and other people. This could be done by ignoring their pain in the way we ignore our own; this could be done in belittling others, not seeing their strength and unwillingly patronizing them; this could be done in a revolutionary tendency that goes after all people that are "perpetrator-like," corresponding to what Herman (1997) called "revenge fantasy."

Paulo Freire (1971), famous Brazilian educator of the poor and critical pedagogue, writes in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* about this natural role switch in the context of the liberation of the oppressed. He says that in the first stage of the fight for liberation, the oppressed are likely to become tyrants or subtyrants themselves, instead of fighting for freedom (p. 40).

Because the oppressed have internalized the image of the oppressor and accepted his rules of action, they fear freedom. Freedom would mean to dispel this image and replace it by autonomy and responsibility. (Freire, 1971, p. 41, C. B., trans.)

The oppressed suffer from the antagonism that has spread in themselves. They realize that they can't really live without freedom. But in yearning for a real existence, they take fright. They are simultaneously themselves and the oppressor, whose consciousness they have internalized. (Freire, 1971, p. 42, C. B., trans.)

He speaks of a "colonized mentality" going along with self-abasement (p. 63).

Interestingly he also points out that amplification can be a tool of liberation when he quotes Marx: "You have to make the real pressure more oppressive, in adding the awareness of oppression, the ignominiousness more ignominious, by making it public. (as cited in Freire, 1971, p. 48, C. B., trans.).

In reading these lines I am reminded of the process-oriented attitude of seeing inner work as a tool for political action. In making my inner oppression public, in becoming aware, in speaking about it, in seeing how I become oppressive on the outside, I do not only begin the process of freeing myself but I also become aware of the suffering and oppression of others. Mindell (1995) writes ". . . my heart is set on getting across the idea that the inner self, relationships and the world are aspects of the same community process" (p. 66).

Perpetrator energy, remembrance, and forgiveness. To realize where I have switched roles from the victim to the perpetrator is a painful process. I remember being ashamed. In my opinion, before we can cross this edge, we already have to have a coat of self-love to put around us, which allows us to be forgiving to ourselves, while honestly acknowledging the truth. That is the work of remembrance in the second phase. It is sobering from what I call "victim's arrogance" in the context of my personal history. In my process of recovery, since my early 20s I have repeatedly had moments where I felt superior with my history, thinking that only a few could really understand and only a few were able to see and realize what I had been through. That gave me a sense of justification when I fought for my right of living—

that actually only I myself was questioning. I remember myself going after people in my younger years. I could be fiery and feisty when I thought I was being treated unfairly. I delivered my message and then I went out of the relationship, not giving people a chance to defend themselves. My husband was the first, who forced me to stay and hear his side too. He must have taught me well, at least for him, because we are still together after 23 years.

Only in the process of leaning into the perpetrator energy did I learn to discern this process of “victim’s arrogance” that Herman describes as the oscillation between inferiority and grandiosity, learned to be aware of it when it happened (or at least shortly after) and becoming able to excuse myself. In the cases in the last part of this paper I will describe episodes of that process. I also realized how my personal power was overwhelming for some. In the school I had last worked in, for example, I had the nicknames of the “ironlady” or the “witch,” these labels were meant not only in a negative way but they show how my power was seen in the field of a school that was primarily liberal, creative and open to the students. (Funnily so, in the school I had worked before and that was known to have very high intellectual standards, I had the nickname of “paradise bird.” I was seen as a person who was relatively young, open and free to experiment, while also competent, and sometimes a bit too emotional. This is a sidelight but it shows how relative power is and how the social field influences it.)

Inner oppression and conflict. Inner oppression plays out in incongruent communication signals. I might feel inferior and this makes me so angry that I yell at the other person, without being aware of what I am doing. I play out the role of the victim and behave like a perpetrator for the other person, leaving her puzzled and angry because of the incongruence between role and behavior. I might even accuse her of doing what I do not want to see in myself, thus projecting my marginalized parts on her.

Goodbread (2010) says that the mere fact of inner oppression and humiliation causes us to use much more strength in conflict than we would need, because we are fighting two opponents at the same time, the outer one and the inner one. In his very practical book, *Befriending Conflict*, he gives access to different inner work exercises that help us to engage with that inner opponent and his or her messages. Goodbread (2010) points out three challenges to befriending conflict: (a) the challenge of the inner opponent, (b) the challenge of the ghosts of past conflict, and (c) the challenge to find a source of inalienable power.

Underestimating our own power and being disconnected from our source of inner strength is a way to escalate conflict and to perpetuate hurt.

It's clear that underestimating our opponent's power is dangerous. That is how wars are lost. But underestimating your own power is how wars are started, and it is responsible for everything from bullying in the schoolyard and workplace, all the way to global escalation of international conflict. (Goodbread, 2010, p. 28)

Instead we could allow ourselves to be inspired by the great examples of nonviolent resistance in history.

Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Nelson Mandela are recognized for helping some of the most disempowered people of the world find sufficient inner strength to free themselves from centuries of overwhelming oppression. Each man had his own strategy. Gandhi emphasized the equalizing power of the spirit. King emphasized the equalizing power of dreams. And Mandela emphasized the equalizing power of dignity and forgiveness. They all downplayed the importance of hierarchical power—the idea that greater power enables the strong to dominate the weak—recognizing that it is ultimately divisive, rather than unifying. They showed instead how power could be a creative force that can free us from domination and disenfranchisement. They all recognized that beefing up hierarchical power could lead only to a reversal of roles in which the oppressed become free by becoming oppressors—and the perpetuation of the social ills that they were fighting. (Goodbread, 2010, p. 27)

As in the quote of Freud before, Goodbread suggests us to “grapple head-on” with these inner opponents and ghosts (p. 44). He recommends process-oriented inner work to prepare for conflict and getting connected to a deep rootedness in ourselves at the essence level of reality (p. 48).

When I read in Goodbread's book about inalienable power, I was reminded of a deep longing of mine: to find inner integrity, to be able to withstand without degrading the other side. I have often asked myself: What would I have done in the face of Nazi dictatorship? I realized that I did not trust that I would have withstood. I had seen situations in my personal life and in my school experience as a teacher where I had not . . . where I had been frozen. I felt guilty about that. I remember times in the MACFOC group processes as facilitator where I had been attacked and could not say anything. I did not know how. I did not know where from . . . and I did not want to do it in a way that was going after people any more. I do understand very well now what Joe Goodbread means when he argues for connection to that source of inner power.

My inner ghost of trauma. Inner opposition in the aftermath of abuse has a ghostlike quality. In my case, it took me years to differentiate that force to "normal" inner criticism that has a useful message that is badly delivered (Straub, 1990). First I had to figure that out and find a way to engage with inner criticism in a way that was helpful to me. I found that a method of inner work dialogues, sometimes written, would help me to extract its essence.

My ghost of trauma, however, does not have a face and body. It cannot be nailed. For a long time I did not even think it had a message. Only lately, about 2 months ago in a conflict with my advisor Joe Goodbread, I realized that it actually has a message: It says: "Do not be! And if you have to be, then at least have the decency to not be yourself! Be someone different! Do not bother and do not be a nuisance! But you are a nuisance, you'll never get it right." That was its basic message. Maybe it had even been the message of my parent's childhood in WWII, growing up in a dictatorship.

Now it would be cynical to try to find a grain of truth in this message. It is a message of oppression. But it was important to me to get to the ground of that message, to understand what happens when I get frozen in conflict, and when I have

to speak or work in public situations. From one moment to the other I lost my competence, to the surprise of my friends and other people around me. I could not think straight nor decide any more, because all I would say or do would be said and done by the wrong person. I captured myself in a paradox. How could I be “not me” being me? Of course there were other moments. But the point is that this feeling always came when I tried something new. I tried facilitating not being me. That did not work so well. I ended up attacking myself of not being myself.

That was quite a process, initiated by a conflict. My advisor Joe Goodbread said to me that my problem was that I was not proactive enough. True . . . I was not proactive enough. That was an accusation I had heard internally a lot, and sometimes externally, people could not understand why it was difficult for me to promote my skills and advertise myself for example. I was often scared and entranced, not allowing myself to make mistakes and to try things out. I had to know. I had to not be myself . . . not the learner. Yes, I was still sitting and thinking and not doing enough. There, I was in consensus with the accusation.

Now with the accusation of not being proactive something strange happens on the dreamland level of inner opposition. I ought to be different; I ought to be proactive. But that is not what I am. So in taking this criticism in, I agree with that ghost, that I ought not to be me. Habitually, I would consent to his opinion and try to not be me and do what he wants, while a great part of my personality would withdraw to the core of my soul, a form of protecting myself, letting an outer shell, my “persona” (the Jungian term for our public self) act for me.

With a huge amount of discipline I had been able to do that in diverse environments. However, there were two side effects: first my “persona” was not very flexible. It was quickly overwhelmed by complex situations, became rigid, and had the tendency to blame outside factors like “the system” or other persons, while, on the other hand, hiding behind “the system” or “the rules” when it was suitable.

Second, and linked to the other, is the fact that I was missing my own power. I felt weak while I was already wearing a suit of armor and looked frightening on the outside.

It was amazing to me when I saw videos from my first facilitations of groups in my MACFOC training. From the outside I looked assertive, as if I was sure of what I was doing—while my inner scene felt chaotic, fearful, and/or frozen. I got an idea about the double messages I was sending. Also, I got an idea about the resource I had gained from my “armor-cased” warrior past. So a part of me was acting like that “thing,” as cold, as efficient, labels given by the part that was suffering inside, the part that was not acknowledged, a part that would be more flexible, that would dare to feel, dare to be open to what is happening at the moment. Because I felt so terrible on the inside, because I felt like a victim of that “thing,” it seemed nearly impossible to identify with my competence.

I would reframe my task of dealing with my inner opponent as follows: It was a painstaking, meticulous work of figuring out the resources that are hidden in all my incongruent behavior and thoughts. For that I had to do the counterintuitive: I had to lean into the pain that was caused by it. I had to amplify it, and by amplifying I mean putting a magnifying glass on it. See when it happens, where it happens, what happens, feel what is there to be felt, hear what is there to be heard, see what is there to be seen. Being sad when I was sad, being hopeless when I was hopeless, being optimistic and hopeful when I was optimistic and hopeful. I had to leave the question behind: why is it happening? That question was not helpful any more at that stage. For me it was enough to know that now I was a grown-up who could actually get the life of that child back. My “child” has been an important inner figure in this process, and it still is. It stands for the pain as much as it stands for unknown realms of my personality, it stands for a flexible playful attitude to life and the tasks at hand that I had for so long admired in others, and thought of as a realm inaccessible for me.

The task of finding the useful bits and pieces in the debris of trauma is a task like in the fairy-tale of Cinderella:

O gentle doves,
 O turtle-doves,
 And all the birds that be,
 The lentils that in ashes lie
 Come and pick up for me!
 The good must be put in the dish,
 The bad you may eat if you wish. (*Grimm's Tales*, n.d.)

I found these verses when I tried to find the English translation to a German saying, which quotes that fairy-tale. For me the situation of Cinderella corresponds in various ways to the situation of confronting the inner opponent of trauma:

Cinderella has a seemingly impossible and useless task to sort out the lentils from the ashes in which they had been thrown by the evil stepmother (one of the many disguises of the perpetrator). Only if she could complete the task in time would she be able to attend the king's reception. To solve the task Cinderella relies on the power of nature, she evokes the birds to help her and they accomplish the task for her. But the evil ghost of the stepmother denies what she has promised and gives her the same task again. Cinderella does not resign. She just revokes the same force of nature again. When she is still denied access to the feast, when she is left alone in the house, she sits by the grave of her mother under the magic hazel bush and cries, and she evokes the spirit of her mother to help her.

Little tree, little tree, shake over me,
 That silver and gold may come down and cover me.
 (*Grimm's Tales*, n.d.)

Finally she get's what she wants. She gets a beautiful dress and coach and she gets to go three times to the reception and the prince sets an eye on her, the third time she looses her shoe and the prince finally finds her because of that shoe, and they lived happily ever after. Cinderella's determination and her trust in the magical power that is deeply connected to the forces of nature (the birds, the hazel bush), to the earth herself (the graveyard) rescue her.

It is an interesting synchronicity that in an earth-based inner work I was lead through by Lily Vassiliou, I found myself standing on a graveyard talking with the force of death. Death and resurrection is one of many images to describe transformation processes. Leaning into the feeling realm of past trauma had that quality for me. I felt so bad that I wanted to die. I went down to an essence place of death (or beyond death?) by the means of inner work, and from there moved up again in a somewhat sober state of mind, acknowledging death as one stage in a process of transformation. In my diploma thesis (Bünger, 2010) I have described that process as “Walking and Falling” inspired by a song of Laurie Anderson (1982):

You're walking.
 And you don't always realize it, but you're always falling.
 With each step you fall forward slightly.
 And then catch yourself from falling.
 Over and over, you're falling.
 And then catching yourself from falling.
 And this is how you can be walking and falling at the same time.

With the same determination as Cinderella's, I was on my way to get to the feast! Like her, the task was not accomplished in one try. In ancient tribes, the figure “three” stood for the many: one, two, many (Ifrah, 1986/1991). That is how I experience it: through repeated cycles of this process I free myself from inner captivity.

Levine (1998) has a similar image when he talks about vortices. He says that there are two antidromic vortices, one is the trauma vortex, generated after the traumatic event that created a fracture in our integrity. A great amount of life energy escapes through that rupture and creates the trauma vortex, thus reducing the flow of life energy (pp. 195 & 197). At the same time and separated from the other originates an antagonistic healing vortex, which is much harder to discern because of our brain's preferred awareness to negative feelings. Trauma transformation, according to Levine (1998), consists of an alternate movement between these two vortices, allowing the positive energy to come forward and help us confront ourselves

with the trauma energy, thus transforming it in a spiraling dance to something new. Mindell has a similar image to describe an attitude of openness to disturbances and inner opposition (see Figure 5),

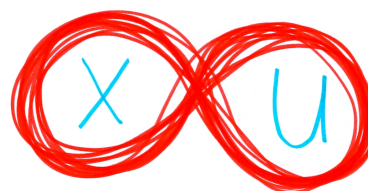


Figure 5. x & u

where x is the disturbing energy and u is the “small u”-energy that is disturbed by it. He recommends facilitating between these two from a Process Mind place that gives us enough space to contain both energies and to develop a deeply democratic attitude towards the disturbance by finding its essence and meaning.

For me, all this could only be done in confronting frightening scenes, like facilitating groups or engaging in conflicts. As a participant in process-oriented group work I had the chance to experience myself in different roles and to see how people reacted to my interventions and statements. I became able to determine my personal medicine that resulted from my personal history: my capacity of holding strong feelings and taking strong stands in strong roles. I trained to become flexible in roles, move in and quickly out, when I had done the opening and other people would fill in their important messages, enriching the role and moving the process further.

Through the challenge of facilitating process-oriented group work and conflicts I am forced to encounter “the thing” to be helpful, I have to be me, I have to trust my feelings and inner states and learn to discern the triggered ones from the ones that lie in the atmosphere of the group, providing important information. I am forced to find a perspective that is “beyond” my triggered states and the cycles of moving through them. This is a work still in progress, and will probably never to be achieved fully.

The verses of Laurie Anderson also provided me with a form of normality for what I was doing and experiencing. Maybe I was not as different from others as I thought I was, and by that I do not only mean other trauma victims, but “ordinary”

happy and sad people. Confronting myself with process-oriented conflict and group work was and is my personal way of transformation.

Spiraling the two energies and reconnection. The process of freeing oneself of trauma is not linear for me. As in the image of the vortices of Levine (1998) or in the recent model of Mindell of the spiraling between the disturbance and the disturbed, I experience it as a process of cycles and cycles. That may sound as hopeless as the statement of Herman, that trauma never heals. There is a provocative voice in me that says: "Hopelessness is not the worst place to start with, at least you can only move up from there." Indeed, this has been one of my experiences in the cycles of trauma transformation.

However, that is only one side of the coin. The other is that little by little it is wearing itself out of the "extraordinary" and becoming "normal." What do I mean by that: I dare to confront myself with situations that I know may potentially throw me into a triggered state: facilitating groups and conflicts, for example. The first times I nearly drowned in my entranced states, my fear, my self-attacks, and more. It took me weeks to recover, repeated inner work to facilitate my inner agitation, help from my supervisors to find the right methods et cetera. But the more I did it, the more I got used to it and had easier access to the level of sentient essence, not needing another person any more to provide me with the space or permission to go there. What had been completely disconnected from my daily awareness and put into a realm of mystery and mysticism, close to my potential craziness and therefore dangerous, by my rational brain, became more and more a daily practice. My own inner reality of facts and ciphers began to find ways to accept that there is another kind of reasoning as important as the one it was providing. The concepts of implicit and explicit memory and the research on mindfulness were of much help in that process, giving my reasoning a model to hold onto. I also found support in the philosophy of Tibetan Buddhism, in the words of Pema Chödrön (1997).

For practitioners or spiritual warriors—people who have a certain hunger to know what is true—feelings like disappointment, embarrassment, irritation, resentment, anger, jealousy, and fear, instead of being bad news, are actually very clear moments that teach us where it is that we're holding back. . . . They're like messengers that show us, with terrifying clarity, exactly where we're stuck. This very moment is the perfect teacher, and, lucky for us, it's with us wherever we are. Those events and people in our lives who trigger our unresolved issues could be regarded as good news. (Chödrön, p. 19)

The journey to reconnect with the inalienable power within begins and ends with *leaning* into the experience and finding its essence in inner work. For Mindell that is training in Deep Democracy. Sentient awareness underlies everything. All that we could ever know about the universe seems to be derived from this form of awareness. All three levels of reality, all parallel worlds, and all kinds of awareness are of equal significance (Mindell, 2007, p. 114).

In trauma transformation the journey goes simultaneously in two directions, to the core of one's being, and to reconnecting with people and the daily world as it is, as Herman describes it in the last phase of trauma recovery. My personal way of retribution seems to be my commitment to a deeply democratic attitude in my work and life in general. The challenges of process-oriented conflict facilitation and group facilitation are for me perfect training grounds.

Chapter 4: Facilitator Development and Trauma Transformation

Group Facilitation and Trauma Transformation

Groups have enormous potential power. They do have a personality of their own, they deal with inner diversity, they have their primary mainstream process, and their marginalized secondary process (Audergon & Arye, 2006; Mindell, 1995; Reiss, 2004). Facilitating groups therefore is a daunting task that many people rightly fear.

Creating freedom, community and viable relationships has its price. It costs time and courage to learn how to sit in the fire of diversity. It means staying centered in the heat of trouble. It demands that we learn about small and large organizations, pone city forums and tense street scenes. If you step into leadership or facilitatorship without this learning, you may spend your time recapitulating the blunders of history. (Mindell, 1995, p. 17)

It is not only a question of personal health that any person aspiring to be a facilitator has the task to understand his own abuse history. If not, she is likely to be knocked out by feelings of numbness, fear, anger, shame, self-doubt, and other mysterious emotions and strong affects (Mindell, 1995, p. 103). Marginalized feelings like fear and hopelessness are lingering in the group atmosphere as ghostlike energies. Every person having a certain personal tendency towards these feelings can be caught by these ghosts. This phenomenon of being “dreamt up” has been researched thoroughly by Joe Goodbread (1997). Dreaming up happens when a person or a group has reached an edge to marginalized secondary parts and is not yet ready to engage with them. On a group level process work calls these moments “hot spots.” A facilitator, like anybody else, experiences this phenomenon. Any feelings from my past abuse history can be triggered. If I do not know enough about it, then I am likely to get stuck.

Process-oriented group work is an awareness model. As in individual work, the core assumption is that marginalized emotions and affects, marginalized energies and persons, carry important information for the wellbeing and the development of the whole group. This approach compares to that of Freire (1974) that the oppressed have not only to free themselves from the oppression, but also

the oppressor. It is also related to the concept of Satyagraha—Gandhi’s nonviolent action. Satyagraha was an instrument of unity meant to benefit both sides, it “. . . was for the opponent’s sake as well. When Satyagraha worked, both sides won” (Shepard, 2004, p. 36).

All these leaders of social change support the importance of hearing the marginalized voices for the benefit of the whole. When the voice of fear and hopelessness is not heard, for example, it has the tendency to escalate conflicts, and in the extreme to create terrorism. Terrorism is a role in every group (Mindell, 1995). It follows the feeling of injustice and long-term marginalization. A person without hope is a potentially dangerous person, for himself and for others (e.g., if my own life does not have a value any more, why should the life of someone else have a value to me?). Research on school shootings initially shows that there always was a troubled and desperate young person without social support, and if the process of isolation can be broken, the path to becoming the avenger can be interrupted and harm prevented (Robertz & Wickenhäuser, 2007). Fear is a secondary process in groups that live with high tensions (Reiss, 2004, p. 55).

To be able to have an attitude of Deep Democracy that holds all these voices and—that may be the specialty of Process Work—be able to detect important signals on all levels of reality (consensus reality, the level of roles and ghost roles, of atmospheres and affects, and the level of the underlying essence of the earth that holds us all), the facilitator has to be deeply democratic with herself. That includes having worked through one’s own history of abuse and trauma. Mindell calls this process “burning wood,” a term he borrowed from an Australian woman (Mindell, 1995). If old and dry wood lies around it is easily ignited into a big fire by sparks of fieriness. I find the term also very appropriate to the inner feeling it creates; burning one’s own wood is a highly energetic and daunting process, as we have seen. The benefits of the process are, according to Mindell:

(1) be sensitive to others, (2) remain centered and not go into shock when you are attacked, and (3) maintain equanimity and provide the group with a sense of safety when the group looks to you for protection in stormy times. (Mindell, 1995, p. 103)

I want to flesh out these three points a little bit from my perspective as a training facilitator (a perspective that I might never lose, as learning is an ongoing process, and the student and researcher will always be a part of my facilitator role).

1. Being sensitive to others means to me to: (a) be able to hear opinions that I do not share without getting reactive or, if I do, to realize that I am polarized and deal with the polarization in myself, finding a more neutral place; (b) realize hot spots in the group, even if I still feel comfortable, a problem, when you have a higher level of tolerance for strong emotions and potential violent situations due to your personal history; (c) perceive states of frozenness in a person, from either side of the momentarily polarized groups; and (d) be able to stand for my own side without having to put the other person down.
2. Staying centered in moments of attack means: (a) knowing the places and situations where I might get triggered, frozen and dissociated; (b) staying connected to the inalienable power in me as described in the previous chapter; (c) being able to formulate my stance in a nonpolarizing way; (d) having a perspective where I see the attacker not only as a person, but as a role that has something important to say, maybe badly delivered; and (e) considering my own rank⁵ as a possible signal of escalation and the attack awakening me to an aspect of rank I was not aware of in the moment.
3. Creating safety means: (a) having the courage to intervene when things get rough or frozen, and slow down the whole process, so that the important messages may get heard; (b) being aware of ghostlike

⁵ I will clarify the specifics of the process-oriented concept of rank in the following section about conflict and in the corresponding case studies.

energies and feelings and find ways to invite them into the room; (c) being able to facilitate a personal conflict so that both sides feel equally respected, and help both sides to deepen the messages of their accusations (the sender as well as the receiver); (d) reading body signals to foresee signals of escalation; and (e) owning my own competency and capacity, which includes pacing my personal development in a way that is caring for my own safety, maybe saying no to a facilitation where I do not feel competent enough.

Basic Assumptions of Process-Oriented Conflict Facilitations

Group facilitation includes conflict facilitation, and that is why I want to introduce some core points of the process-oriented conflict paradigm. I call them axioms because that is the name for the core assumptions that underlie all reasoning and all operations in mathematics. I formulated these axioms in my diploma thesis (Bünger, 2010).

Ten Axioms of Process-Oriented Conflict Facilitation

1. *Every conflict is an invitation to personal growth, to an extension of our repertoire in attitudes and actions.*
2. *Every relationship has its underlying organizational principle.*

From a broader perspective one could even say that this organizational principle needs two persons to incarnate a special aspect or information in the relationship, the family, the organization, the society, or the world in general.

3. *If I am being accused of something, it is a potential moment to open up the door to an unknown part of my identity.*

I am invited to find a grain of truth in the accusation, to bring awareness to what I am doing, why I am doing it and what I aim for. The accusation itself is like a label to an empty box. Once I have filled that box with my

personal content for that label, my essence of the grain of truth, I can use that quality intentionally, and thus in a more useful way. Often I am being accused of things that I deny responsibility for, because the content belongs to the secondary process of my identity.

4. *On the contrary, what I accuse others of, is partly a projection of marginalized parts of my identity.*

What I cannot accept in myself I object to in others.

5. *From axioms 3 and 4, we can conclude that conflicts arise at the edge of the primary process of both persons.*

6. *If both people insist on their primary processes, the conflict cannot be transformed.*

In the best case it recycles with manageable energy, giving the parties a next chance to retrieve the hidden information necessary for the process; in the worst case it escalates, the parties demonize each other, which could result in war or cutting off the relationship.

7. *If one of the parties is able to go over the edge, finding the essence of the accusation, the other parties are pushed to their edge automatically.*

They are bound to realizing the edge, because the scene has shifted.

Saying it with the words of Gary Reiss (2004): "The beauty of conflict work is that if one side moves the other side also has to move in some way. It is like the two sides are involved in a tug of war. If one side moves, the other side is affected." (p. 77)

8. *Inner oppression and inner opposition inflame the conflict.*

We are actually fighting two opponents at the same time, which doubles the feeling of victimization. We react in a feeling of powerlessness and marginalize our power. We do not realize how strong and intimidating we may come across as. Our conflict partner reacts to the power he experiences, and does not know how we feel inside. He experiences

himself as a victim of our power. Hence he arms himself and comes across with a matching energy that we experience as inappropriate and threatening. It is easy to see how this process inflames a cycle of revenge. The other possible reaction to the double power of inner and outer opponents is implosion instead of explosion. The energy turns inward and ends in self-destruction, hopelessness and despair, we lose all contact to our inner life force. Or we might try to convince the conflict partner how weak and helpless we are, and manipulate him or her by means of our weakness. Or a combination of all.

9. *Not to identify with our privileges and rank is a means of provoking conflicts.*

Rank is the sum of our privileges. We are rarely aware of our privileges and pretend we do not have any, or see merely the privileges the other person has over us. Because privileges can not be denied (Mindell, 1995), we send double messages that confuse the other person and are mostly interpreted as provocation by the less privileged side. That is the reason why it is important to develop an awareness of one's own rank, not only in conflict. Process Work has a broad concept of rank that includes not only the social, but also the psychological and the transpersonal levels.

10. *Process Work sees conflict as a means of finding a deeper understanding of myself, my conflict partner, and of the flow of nature.*

If we are able to approach conflict in this way, we open up to what wants to happen. We do not fix ourselves in one specific identity but give ourselves the permission to find new ways of being and reacting. We get more flexible and fluid which helps us to find a way of action even in a complex environment. In the best case, we develop a "guesthouse"

attitude (Hohler & Goodbread, 2009). We learn to discern when our inner guesthouse is open and when it is closed, and deal carefully with ourselves and with others. We develop a position of eldership that is able to like the diverse parts of ourselves and of others.

Resolution is not the highest aim of process-oriented conflict facilitation. Resolution is a temporary phenomenon (Mindell, 1992). The goal is awareness. Conflict facilitation envisages deescalation by slowing the process of escalation down, instead of oppressing it and demanding a certain behavior, thus getting a deeper understanding of the process quality of the relationship. Conflict resolution and the deepening of the relationship result from a change of attitudes due to the new perception of the opponent. Process Workers also include perceptions that are neither cognitive nor mere sensory, but emerge from a sentient ground (Mindell, 2002).

Heim Omer, professor of psychology at the University of Tel Aviv, who developed a model to deal with violence based on Gandhi's concept of Satyagraha, sees demonization as a kind of epistemology of our mainstream culture. Demonization of our inner or outer enemy is the key to the escalation of conflicts. The basic assumption of demonization is to see every person as basically dangerous, and therefore to be controlled. The "demonic worldview" assumes hidden destructive motives in everyone; it is a hostile fault of perception, and a self-organizing process of human misfortune. To the "demonic worldview" he opposes the "tragic worldview," "tragic" meant in the context of classical Greek tragedy: Human beings are what they are. Getting hurt is an unavoidable constant of human existence. Bad actions can stem from the best intentions. The other is basically similar to us. We cannot understand the motives of other people better than they do (Omer, Alon, von Schlippe, 2007). Mindell goes even further when he says that the other cannot really be separated from ourselves, a view that is supported in a quote from Albert Einstein.

A human being is a part of a whole, called by us “universe,” a part limited in time and space. He experiences himself, his thoughts and feelings as something separated from the rest . . . a kind of optical delusion of his consciousness. This delusion is a kind of prison for us, restricting us to our personal desires and to affection for a few persons nearest to us. Our task must be to free ourselves from this prison by widening our circle of compassion to embrace all living creatures and the whole of nature in its beauty. (Einstein, n.d.)

The Process Work perspective on conflicts also includes the field aspect of any conflict. A conflict does not only belong to the parties that are involved in it at the moment, but to everybody (Mindell, 1995). Demonization and dehumanization are field effects. Phillip Zimbardo conducted the famous “prison experiment” at Stanford University, where average students played the role of prisoners or guards, and which was stopped abruptly after only 6 days because the situation escalated. It became overly real, changing the students who acted as guards to torturers and those who acted as prisoners to their helpless victims. Studies since then question how it was possible that average young men become “evil monsters” in such a short time?

How is it possible for ordinary, average, even good people to become perpetrators of evil? In trying to understand unusual, or aberrant behavior, we often err in focusing exclusively on the inner determinants of genes, personality, and character, as we also tend to ignore what may be the critical catalyst for behavior change in the external situation or in the system that creates and maintains such situations. (Lucifer Effect, n.d.)

Investigating field effects and their influence on “good” and “evil” behavior, and trying to reduce the suffering that stems from stereotyping and marginalizing groups of people as well as their inner parts, are core issues of process-oriented group and conflict facilitation.

Chapter 5: Stories of Empowerment and Integration

One of my teachers once said to me, “You only learn riding when you ride.” We cannot learn facilitation skills and train in useful attitudes in conflict except through doing it, making the mistakes that we make in lack of awareness, and build on the moments and interventions that prove to be helpful. When we get thrown off the horse then we sit in the saddle again and try once more, hopefully having learned from the experience and leading the horse with more awareness. I owe my own process of “burning wood” in the last 2 ½ years to all the conflicts and group experiences where I got stuck, frozen, hopeless, desperate, inflated, and attacked. When I read Joe Goodbread’s *Befriending Conflict* (2010), it made a lot of sense to me that conflicts stood at the beginning of every cycle of integration. When conflict triggers ghosts of past conflict, it is a natural thing that they confront us with our abuse history.

It was in leaning into these experiences that the theory of conflict facilitation got flesh on its bones for me, that I understood, not only with my rational thinking, but with my implicit memory system and body experience, how theory was related to my own experience. I learned a lot from the stories of my teachers and peers in the MACFOC program, stories of failure and stories of success, I found them inspiring to my own thinking and they helped me reflect my own experience in a larger context, hindering my traumatized self to indulge in her habituated isolation and “negative inflation” and liberate her inch by inch from her “self-demonization.” That is why I want to share a few stories that show the different states of “wood burning” and learning.

My focus in these stories is the process of transformation, the resources gained from the exploration of the perpetrator energy, from getting involved with inner opponents, ghosts, monsters, and the experience of entrancement, frozenness, dissociation, and whatever else there is to be met. I want to show how this is a process of empowerment which potentially makes the situation safer for everybody.

We have defined trauma from a Process work perspective as rank abuse of one person over another. In this context, it is not surprising that rank will be talked about a lot in the context of the stories. I will define the process-oriented specifications of rank in the corresponding context, linking them immediately with the case material.

The stories are my own, or stories of my clients. They are different in length and in content. When it seems relevant, I refer to, or explain details of theory. To protect the identity of my conflict partners and clients, I changed names and I also changed or omitted details of the context while keeping the essential information, and I have asked all of the persons involved if I could use their story for this paper, to which they have agreed.

First Story: Secondary Perpetrator Energy and Rank Entanglement

Here we meet two strong women, both feeling hurt and put down by the other, complementary in their styles, and growing into making their rank useful for the other. We have the privilege to accompany the conflict between the two of them over half a year's time.

Silvana and Tania worked together as students and members of a bigger team for a presentation in a seminar. The whole process in the team leading up to the presentation had been very difficult, until 2 days before the deadline, there still was not consensus about the basic approach and the details of the presentation. Tania had sent in her part of the presentation in the afternoon before the presentation, she thought she had done it correctly, as discussed in a prior meeting. That night, Tania was already in bed, emailing a friend, when she received an email from Silvana, telling her that she had to rework the presentation, because it looked complicated and used language that Silvana thought was not appropriate in the context. Tania got furious and desperate. She was tired and exhausted. The last thing she needed was this email. She thought she did not have the energy to go over the work she had done during the day and she felt put down by the way the

message was delivered. She knew that Silvana had a lot more experience in the context they had to present for and she felt intimidated by it, not seeing in the moment, that she had more experience in the area of her presentation part. Tania preferred to stay in her grumpy mood, slept badly, and got up moody the next morning, full of resentment. Her ministry of defense had been arming up over night. She came to the seminar, gossiping with her friends before the presentation, not being aware of the fact that she would harm the reputation of her team partner who was presenting before the same group, because she had more credit in the group at the moment than Silvana. Silvana saw what was happening and reacted, inviting Tania to work on the conflict. Tania accused Silvana of undermining her competency by sending her an email late at night and Silvana stood for her field competency, saying to Tania that she had a bad feeling about the framing of her work and the graphics looked too complicated. Silvana also said that she on the contrary was relying on the competency of Tania, when she sent her that email, knowing that she would know how to interpret it and what to do from it. She also said that she was not able to react beforehand because she had had an extremely busy and challenging day. To that Tania could not say much. Silvana had a point here, either Tania wanted to be respected for her competency and react professionally to critical voices from the outside, or she could decide to make herself small to be protected and would not be respected. Tania was trapped.

Rank aspects. Let us look at this conflict and talk about rank first. As I have mentioned before, rank is the sum of our inherited and earned privileges. In Process Work we discern social rank, psychological rank, spiritual rank, and we look at how these different layers of rank play out in the context of the particular situation. The rank issue in this case is very interesting, because it has many layers.

Social rank. Let us look at social rank first. Social rank is mostly inherited. It is comprised of color of skin, class, sexual orientation, education, profession, knowledge, religion, age, and health (Mindell, 1995). What is more central in our

society has more rank. In Swiss society health and youth have more rank than illness and age, higher education has rank over craft, intellectual knowledge has rank over feeling or intuition. Social rank is contextual to the society we live in and to the group we are part of right now. What is central for the group, has rank, and what is pushed to its margins, has less or no rank. There are, however, more global privileges in our world like being a man, being healthy, being of white skin color or being heterosexual. The media of a society shows what is central. A person with high social rank has a higher sense of entitlement and is overall healthier (Morin, 2006).

Both women had a lot of social rank. Both were white, middle-class women of more or less the same age. Silvana was the leader of a company and had a lot of field experience and was used to conducting teams. She worked hard and had a good income. Tania had not long ago decided to change her professional career. She had worked in a different area beforehand that was valued less in society than Silvana's. She lacked field experience, but she had led a successful professional life beforehand and she knew she was good enough to find a job again. Though not as well paid as in the other field, it was enough. She was married and could rely on her husband and she had some money in the background to pay for her studies, which was not the case for the other woman. Seen from the outside, the two women had more or less equal social rank.

Rank is highly contextual. In the context of this setting, the two women both had rank of knowledge. While Silvana had a lot of expertise in the field, Tania had equal or even more knowledge about the background concepts and methods they should apply in the presentation. Only she did not identify with it, or see this as important. What she also did not see was her rank in the student group. People trusted her and respected her. Tania somewhat knew that but she was not owning it.

If she had, she would not have brought in the group as a third party⁶, gossiping about her partner, putting her in an impossible situation. She misused her rank because she felt victimized. It had happened unconsciously although she knew from her own experience how hurtful the use of third parties could be. We will speak later about the dreaming parts in the background of this behavior.

Psychological rank. A person has psychological rank when she or he feels comfortable and safe. In many societies and professional contexts people who can stay calm and have an assertive attitude in conflicts are respected and people who are insecure, get emotional, enraged, or even out of control, are disrespected (Mindell, 1995). If somebody is at ease even in highly emotional situations, he has higher psychological rank. People with higher psychological rank generally feel more at ease in relationships. If psychological rank is used well, it goes along with high intrapersonal and interpersonal intelligence (Gardner, 2002). If we are unaware of our psychological rank, it can en-trance us and blind us to the hurt of others. We look down on the inner fights of the other, either because we have already been there or because we did not ever have these kinds of inner conflicts. We expect others to buy into the rules instead of questioning them and take a stance for a change of the circumstances (Mindell, 1995).

Both women had a different style. Tania could be more direct, quite a feisty character, when she felt treated badly, at least with other women, and she was more comfortable with heated up conflict, while Silvana was much more diplomatic, trying to stay kind and bringing her messages in a suitable tone of voice and in less directly aimed messages. In the context of the given situation, it is not easy to say who had

⁶ A “third party” in a conflict is a means of one conflict partner to back up his power. He uses one or several persons **who** are not involved directly in the argument between him and his conflict partner. He might quote them in the argument; he might use them as alliance. Whatever he does is to the disadvantage of his conflict partner, because the latter cannot defend himself directly against the third party. It is a means to take away power from the other and build up one’s own. It is an escalation strategy, which is, however, seldom used consciously but out of a feeling of inferiority in comparison to the other.

higher psychological rank. From the outside it seemed that Tania was more emotional and Silvana stayed calmer, but I would assume that on the inside it could very well be the other way round. Tania had a strong sense of righteousness (with the support of the group) and Silvana was terrified of strong conflicts.

Spiritual rank. Spiritual rank is a term to describe the power a person has earned in having lived through an extremely difficult individual or collective history of abuse or trauma (e.g., genocide, torture, war, captivity, extreme experiences of violence in personal life). Often people from minorities and oppressed cultures share that rank. The abuse history is part of the identity of that person. Persons with high spiritual rank may have a charisma of someone who dwells beyond life and death. They appear very strong. No one could harm them more than they have already been harmed.

This attitude can be experienced as distant or cold, as if the person was not human any more. Persons with high spiritual rank have a warrior-like identity, misleading them to appear as if they look down on people who do not have a history of individual or collective abuse, or on those who are on the edge to fall into pieces.

Both conflict partners had been through some difficult experiences in their lives, as far as I know. They were both women, which includes an experience or marginalization in a patriarchal system, although did not belong to a marginalized minority group.

An interesting thing about rank is that the more obvious the rank seems, the less we tend to identify with it. Rank blinds us to its reality. When we use it without awareness, we send double signals and can easily become abusive to others. One might think that people are automatically aware of their high spiritual rank, but that is not the case. They are identified with their struggle for survival, but not necessarily with the privilege, the courage, and the strength they acquired in it. If the charisma

and the power identity are communicated in unintended signals, it can be irritating, intimidating or even downing to the mainstream (Mindell, 1995).

I already explained how Tania misused her contextual and psychological rank to her advantage over Silvana. The righteousness with which Tania approached Silvana might have been a signal of unacknowledged spiritual rank.

Did Silvana do something similar? I am not sure, I know her less than the other woman, but it seems that she was not aware of the rank of her field knowledge and extended experience in it. She could not imagine how little the other knew about the field context and how this made her insecure. If she had, she might have found a different way to communicate—or let it go as it was—after all it was an exercise

Roles. That is how we move to the role level. The two women were not fighting alone. There was a ghost hovering over the scene: the teacher and evaluator. I know that both are identified with being “good students” wanting to fulfill, or even achieve well beyond the requirements.

I know something more about Tania because I have worked with her. The evaluator was for Tania a most frightening inner figure. She ought to be nothing else but perfect. One inch under perfect was not enough. She brought this figure from an abusive past, where she was punished with emotional deprivation and detention, and could never ever achieve the approval of her parents. When Silvana said to her that she was not doing it right, she fell into the parallel world of the hopeless child trying desperately to make things right. She hated that emotional state! Her desperation went against the only person who was available at the moment and who had caused the momentary backlash. The more Silvana tried to be professional, the more Tania’s inner life escalated and Silvana shapeshifted for her into the monster of her past, depriving her of possible success. She mistrusted her partner deeply.

That same evening, when the presentation had been held, fairly well, with good discussions around it, and the acknowledgment that the problem the group had to solve had not been easy in the first place, Tania felt dismissed again by Silvana in

another group situation. She accused her of wanting to put her down deliberately. Her tone and behavior was all heated up. It was only when the other person said strongly, "NO! NOT THIS WAY! NOT NOW!" and broke into tears, that Tania woke up and got sober again. She could see the person again before her eyes. She could hold her and comfort her for a hurt that did not belong in this scene. She realized that she had gone too far. She could see the privileges she had and the other had not when they talked. Content-wise she still felt righteous, but she saw how she was whacking the other. She could listen to her peer and friend. What she was not able to see at the time was that she projected her terrifying ghost of the past onto her partner.

However, she persevered in wanting to comprehend what had happened. She was astounded by the intensity of her reaction and wanted to get a deeper understanding of it. She took responsibility and apologized. She took responsibility to deepen the relationship and to understand the other person better. Thanks to the reciprocal generosity and perseverance of Silvana, this became possible. It took another two sessions of conflict work in a half year, and some other puzzling conflicts and frozen situations in other relationships, as well as repeated inner work, until Tania was able to say to Silvana: "I am deeply sorry, I had mistaken you for a past ghost that nearly killed me when I was a child. And I am grateful that you stopped me and said NO, making me human again." The result was baffling for Tania. Silvana was immensely relieved and acknowledged the apology fully. Furthermore she said that for her it had been an achievement to say NO so clearly, be direct and stop abusive behavior, something she had not been allowed to do when she was little. Then Silvana apologized for not having used her professional rank more efficiently and usefully in intervening much earlier in the process of the assignment, stopping recycling, and helping to get clearer about the work at hand and form

pragmatic solutions. In turn, this was a great relief for Tania, because she felt seen in the situation that had started the whole process.

Once the perpetrator figure of the past was named and put into its place and time, both women could appreciate the other and felt appreciated. The perpetrating energy no longer intruded behavior between them. Both women had made their psychological rank useful by hanging in the conflict until the essence of it was found and they both had learned what was in there to learn for them. For Tania, “hanging in there” had finally made sense of her emotional outbreaks and her inner reactions to evaluating authorities. From there she could start to build an inner instance of evaluation that was less harmful to her, that would make useful suggestions for improvement, and that would sometimes give her a break.

Second Story: The Power of Dissociation

In my life I had often been accused of talking too much. That was an insult to me because that would be something I reproached my mother about. The result of the outer criticism was inner criticism and the attempt to control myself. For a long time, I never had the idea to question or deepen the accusation. What does “speaking too much” mean? What were people reproaching me for? What was it that made them feel uncomfortable? Was it the fact that they could not speak as much as I? Was what I told them boring? Was I always talking too much or only in certain situations? If the latter, then what were the situations? However, in my conflict training I did. The first person with whom I could deepen the accusation was a cofacilitator, let him be Mike. I was preparing to facilitate a group with Mike, and he said something to me from which I began to make long and complicated explanations and went on and on. Mike interrupted me and asked me what I was doing, why I was talking without comma and point. I had no idea. I realized that what I was talking about was not even of much interest to me. When I took a few seconds and stayed silent, I realized that I was not fully present any more. A crucial part of me had left while something was still talking. Mike had been aware of that. He had felt

neglected. Although I could not come out with an immediate explanation of what was happening, this moment was very important to me for several reasons. First: In that moment I was able to witness my own dissociation. That was something very special. My inner observer saw that I was not there—instead of just being in the experience itself. Second: For the first time I realized that the accusation of talking too much could be made out of true friendship. Mike wanted me to be with him and he had the guts to claim my presence. I came back enough that I could feel his friendship. I said: “You must really like me!” and he said: “Off course I do!” That was as much as I could hold for the moment. My eyes filled with tears. Third: Obviously I was at an edge in the relationship. It was not that others left me isolated. It was I who left them! For reasons that would still have to be explored. It was startling to me. The moment was as painful as revealing. If it was me who left the relationship, then something could be done. It was in my hands, so to speak. Often in my depressed moments I had thought that there was no place for me in the world. Now I saw that some inner voice was the cause of that feeling and nobody else.

When I began to explore the moments when I left relationship while my body was still there (and I had a lot of research opportunities), I found out that I protected myself from hurt and that I left out of mistrust. To stay in the relationship in these moments was incredibly hurtful. I could never really name what it was that hurt so much. It was a feeling of drowning in a sea of tears. It happened around challenging moments, when my competency was asked for, when I had to formulate my needs and bring in my own initiative, and it happened in moments when I got emotionally hurt and tried to keep up appearances.

I tried new strategies, when I trusted the people I was in relationship with enough. I could not explain myself, but I stayed. I dared to say that I could not say anything more at the moment, so I did not. I cried and tried to stay until I could go on. It was the beginning of trusting more generally. Until then I had not been aware

of how much I still mistrusted people, how quickly I would refrain and cope on my own. The impossible challenges of my childhood, the loneliness of neglect, and the role switch of having to be the mother of my depressed mother after my father and sister left the house when I was 8, had made me a deeply mistrusting person. I mistrusted mostly men and persons of higher contextual rank, not knowing that it was my little girl inside who was informing me. Once I was able to be more of a mother to her, I could also mother my moments of grief and tears.

Interestingly so, I also came to see the advantages of my “spells.” Mike had been the first person to be so direct. He was a psychologically trained person and very awake. Many others had been entranced by my long-winded speeches. Another story came to mind: When I was about 16, I used to make little escapes when I could not stand life any more. I would hitchhike to the next city, walk around or sit by the beautiful green river, just watch it flow, and then I would hitchhike home again. Nobody knew where I was. I was a very good student. I did not care if I had some unexcused hours. Neither did my father and his second wife. Once I drove home with a man. When he began to talk about me giving something back to him in return, and how he would expect of young women to be of service in return for the service of transportation, I remember that I was thinking of every thing in my school bag that would be usable as a weapon, while I was talking to him continuously, arguing against his arguments, entrancing him with my words. It worked. He let me out at the right place, and I went with relief, maybe for him as well, who knows.

Now, I would not recommend that technique as a protection for young women. I do not know how determined the guy was in the first place. But in thinking over this experience, I got a glimpse of the power of dissociation, one of the powerful strategies I had found to keep me alive and coping. I agree with Rothschild (2000) that reframing trauma symptoms as survival strategies and seeing the power that lies in them is a step towards reconnection with mutual power within. Dissociation is said to be the most powerful symptom of trauma (Herman 1997; Levine, 1998; Rothschild,

2000). Now, where was I when I was able to “see” myself dissociating? Is that a form of “Metadissociation” or does it show how the possibility to live in parallel worlds is a part of our natural repertoire? All mindful awareness trainings aim to develop a place in ourselves from where we can witness ourselves in a compassionate way, stay present while being detached. Arny Mindell once said in a supervision seminar: “As facilitator you have to be half in and half out to be of help.” Learning to discern what happens when we get stuck or behave in triggered ways could be a training for this very special state of mind.

When I catch myself talking just to talk (and that happens more often, the catching, that is), I ask myself now: “What was the edge you missed? When did you begin to feel uncomfortable, challenged or hurt? What is it that you can not say? And is what you are doing now, the right strategy for this situation?” It may or it may not. At least I have a choice then.

Third Story: Trapped in the Role of the Monster

In this story we will see how it is possible to stand for oneself after being publically blamed, when the signals of inner oppression can be detected, and transformed into useful action. The importance of owning one’s own rank is fleshed out, even in the role of the victim. The story also shows how much transformative healing power the victim has, and how it can be made useful, and how the ghost from past conflict inflames the scene.

The Accusation. Ursula had been a primary school teacher for many years. Now she was enjoying her well-deserved sabbatical, and the personal development training she was engaged in, until she received a phone call, ordering her to a meeting at the educational department. She was being accused of abusing the children of her class.

Her not so experienced and very friendly substitute teacher Martha had heard from a group of boys that they did not like Ursula so much, because she was overly

severe with them (e.g., she would tear up their homework and throw it out of the window). The boys, ages 9 to 10, were from a class, in which Ursula gave only a few lessons. The main teacher, Fred, was much younger than Ursula. Compared to him she was much more experienced and had another style of teaching, she was indeed more demanding when it came to discipline.

The substitute, Martha, heard the story from the boys and went to talk with Fred. Fred, who knew that these boys had not gotten along too well with Ursula, went to the headmaster of the school, who spoke to the school's superintendent, who then requested the meeting at the educational department. On the way, it seems, all of them had forgotten about the person they were accusing. No one at any moment had thought of speaking to Ursula and asking her about her perspective on the incidents, although she was not far away, as she could be reached at her known home address.

In the meeting, the person from the department, knowing Ursula and also the superintendent and the headmaster, who were all present, took Ursula's side when the other two formulated the accusations. Some years ago Ursula had been in a very difficult situation in her family life, and during that time she had been overly stressed, which sometimes showed in a roughness and impatience with her students. Since then, her normal style of strong leadership in the classroom was easily labeled as "severe" and "inhuman." Ursula could refer to a situation, when the boys must have become angry with her, but rejected the content of the accusation. She had never ripped sheets of homework nor thrown anything out of the window. The agent of the department believed her and protected her professional identity, seeing well how past reputation can haunt you for a long time when you are working in a public capacity.

She came to me for supervision. She was infuriated and hurt. It was about 1 week before she would have to start teaching again. How should she react? How should she meet her class? The situation was very complicated. There was not only

the problem of how to deal with the people who had not talked to her but “brought her to court.” There was also the fact that Martha had not done all her work, the children were missing content, especially in calculations. Martha had spent a lot of time having class conferences and had given priority to disturbances and been very open to questions and various directions the children had led her. The children, being used to rather a tight form of guidance, enjoyed the softer way, at least for some time. Martha had also given marks that were not realistic, repeating tests when the kids complained. Because the class was about to come into the last class of primary school and only a few of the children wanted to change directly to higher education, the missing content and the unrealistic marks were a problem that had to be named and the parents had to be informed with the next report. Ursula would have to catch up with the content, meaning she would have to pressure the children to work harder. She also wondered how to deal with the boys and their class teacher Fred? How was collaboration still possible after the public blaming? Last, she wondered how to address the headmaster—a relationship that had not been easy beforehand.

Because she had been accused of being a perpetrator, she was trapped in a double bind. If she became enraged and fought for her recognition, she would nourish the voices that said she was too fiery a character. If she did not, she would betray her own professional integrity. Either way, in spite of the injustice of the public blaming, she would lose.

Victim’s energy and safety. Ursula was relieved that I, like her friends, was shocked by the facts she told me. I was sad and also angry to hear what had happened to her, and I told her so. It was important to her that her feelings were believed to be adequate to the situation. In another traumatic event, a past family situation, she had been told that her feelings were not right, that she should not react so strongly. Therefore she felt insecure and needed other voices to confirm, that the way she had been treated in this present situation was not right. Fortunately Ursula

had a few very dear friends, some of them also teachers, who stood completely behind her. She was living alone, but her adult and nearly adult children went to visit her regularly. She had build up resources of mental training and other cognitive techniques during the sabbatical and she was filled with good, interesting experiences from that time, and supported by a group of peers who continued to meet, and her peers told her it was not “business as usual” what happened to her and even suggested she change schools. But that was not an option for Ursula at the moment. She had to find a way to cope with the mess and the several scenes of conflict. Fortunately, Ursula knew that many parents liked her style of teaching, providing clarity and safety, and only a few thought she was too severe.

Perpetrator’s intrusion. When we prepared for her return to her class, and having to take a strong stance for hard work again, I asked her to rehearse it in front of me. While she was doing it, her voice was very loud as if she was defending herself and she made fists while talking, knocking them on her knee to emphasize her sentences. I could see the hurt and I could see how she was reactive to a role in the system that put her down. I asked her to step out of the scene and showed her the signals I had seen. She said she could feel it in her body. She felt trapped, crumbled, angry. I knew that Ursula loved her profession and asked her what she loved about it, and about her class. She told me many things, and I could see her face glowing and her body relaxing. After that I asked her to go back to the scene.

She sat for some moments, looked at the imaginary class and smiled. Then she began to speak in a motherly way, not denying the facts but also not throwing them in the faces of the school children. She could tie in with the warm contacts she had had a few days before with some of them. They had told her how happy they were that she would come back.

The fists were an important signal, but not for her class. The fists were a signal of the “trapped monster” within, a signal of a secondary process of perpetrator’s energy. It was still to be explored how these fists would find the right

address and the right way of expression. Her tightness, her strong voice, the fists on her knees were signals of a reaction to an inner opponent who said: "You are a monster, people are right, you would better acknowledge the fact." In spite of all she knew rationally, some part of her agreed with the accusation. In this state of mind, in this parallel world, that was informed by another scene of hurt, she was cut off from her greatest resource in her job, the deep passion she had for teaching, and for the school children she was working with.

It was amazing for me to see the difference. It still is very touching to think of it. As soon as she could reconnect to the power of the passion for teaching, it was easy for her to be in her class again. The children made a great welcome event for her, and it was easy to explain to them that they would have to work hard. They already knew they would need to work hard. They had had fun in the beginning with the substitute teacher, and they had enjoyed the more leisured time for a while, and they knew that this could not go on, and they were relieved that there would be a time of more discipline again. They needed her as class teacher to take that role. It was hard for them to take that role themselves.

Rank. Of course Ursula was angry with Fred, who had not questioned the slanderous remarks of the boys. He had not asked them for details so that he could confirm their accusations, or not. He had not spoken to the parents. Why had he not phoned her to ask her view on it? That the substitute would come to Fred with the matter made sense because Fred knew the children, and he knew Ursula. But how Fred had dealt with the situation was not adequate at all.

I hypothesized there might be a rank issue in the background. In comparison to Fred, who was in his first year of teaching, Ursula was an "old warhorse"; she had seen it all. Ursula was an assertive, intelligent, efficient, competent, interesting, knowledgeable teacher. She had tried not to say too much to Fred, because she did not want to stand in his way, but she said that she disapproved of his leadership

sometimes. She found that he tried too much to be a friend instead of filling out his role as a teacher. The fact that she did not say it directly and tried to be friendly, let the young teacher make his own inferences, but did not change the fact of her rank. So in this relationship, she also did not fill out her rank as a “teacher” to him. As I said before, we cannot get rid of rank. If we do not acknowledge it openly, it comes out in double signals. I explained the concept of rank to her and we explored her social, contextual, and psychological rank. On all three levels, she realized, she had a lot of rank. The next question was how to make that rank useful, for herself as well as for the other.

Something interesting happened. She thought back to the time when she was a beginner. It had been easy for her because her predecessor had been old and tired, and everybody loved her newcomer’s energy. She also had another teacher with much more experience who had volunteered to be her mentor, when she needed something. So she had both: freedom and support in the background. In addition, at that time, the teacher was still the king in the classroom. Hardly anything would be questioned, either by the parents or the children. Times change. Ursula could see how it was quite different for Fred. As she could step in his shoes for a moment, she thought that he probably had not tried to harm her deliberately, thus resolving the assumptions of evil intentions that could have lead to demonization. He could not have foreseen that the whole case would be dragged to the department of education by the headmaster and the superintendent. Fred’s overly friendly behavior after her return, of which Ursula was quite suspicious, was probably due to him sincerely feeling bad, and given the rank difference, it would probably have to be her to make the first step to clear the relationship, which she did later on at the end of the school year. This scene of conflict was no longer as hot after we had worked on it. Ursula could take the time she needed and prepare herself to bring across her crucial points:

I want to know if you were aware of what you were doing when you went straight to the headmaster with the accusation, if you wanted to harm my reputation in some way, and if yes, why? I want to let you know how much the consequences of your behavior did hurt and harm me. Please do not ever do something like that again. I might be quite a strong looking person, but I can be hurt, and I also can listen. So please speak with me, when something bothers you. I will listen and I will answer sincerely. If the first questions are congruently answered with NO, I am apt to forgive you, forget about what happened, and start a new level of cooperation. And I am also here for you, if ever you have any questions around teaching. When I do not say anything to you, it is because I respect your own experiences and I do not want to impose myself.

That is what Ursula brought across and she believed the young colleague when he told her that he had not spent too much time thinking about the possible consequences. The whole experience was a huge learning for him. They went on cooperating better than they had before, while acknowledging the fact that they were from a different generation and also a different kind of person.

The rank concept, and seeing her contextual power, had helped Ursula to step out of the victimization in this relationship. The whole way she was able to go on with the relationship after that, showed once more her immense psychological rank, made useful for the benefit of professional cooperation and consequently to the whole system of colleagues, school children, and parents. Now, that she had resolved that conflict, Ursula realized that there had been a need to draw a clear line and stand for her side, but the emotion of despair and the deep threat to her integrity were not part of that relationship.

When we explored the relationship to the headmaster and superintendent, we found fundamental differences in people skills between Ursula and the two of them. Ursula disagreed profoundly with the style of the two of them. Again we found rank differences. In comparison to Ursula, the headmaster did not dare to take clear stances with parents, and if there were complaints, or even the threat of it, he would give them priority, sometimes with the cost of letting his own staff down. Ursula had been trying for years to educate her headmaster in people skills; with bad results of course. In systemic rank she was the subordinate. She was not in the position to

educate her headmaster, even if she suffered from his bad people skills. The headmaster was soon taken ill and diagnosed with burnout, so the whole conflict had to be postponed. When the headmaster came back to work half time after a few months, Ursula went to see him and told him that she had thought about changing jobs. The headmaster said that he could see why, and said that he would like her to stay because her skills were important to the school. Ursula said that she would, but she would also leave the school immediately, even in the midst of the semester, if something similar ever happened again. She wanted him to talk with her and hear her perspective first, when there were complaints.

In the meantime, during the headmasters' absence Ursula developed new styles to get what she needed from the superintendent. The latter also had been exceedingly friendly since the meeting at the department. Ursula thought she was the most hideous person. When I first suggested that Ursula could take advantage of the bad conscience and the over-friendliness to get what she needed to make her task easier, she refrained. That was not her style. She did not want to be as slimy as the other person. But she also knew from past experiences, that the other would not ever meet Ursula's need for a direct, frank discussion over the events. So why not give it a try and meet the other with her own weapons? Together, we stalked sliminess. I asked her, what made the sliminess so terrible for her, and how it looked like. Reluctantly, she showed me the "slimy" behavior, and then I helped her to feel it more in her body, and make a figure out of it that was not the actual person but a dream figure related to the energy she was experiencing when in her body while she was acting "slimy." She found the figure of an "opera diva," who even sang when she was talking, and who would always get what she wanted, because she was irresistible. Ursula loved Italy and classical music, which helped her to connect with that figure. Finding a matching energy in herself, and having fun with it, although it still felt edgy to her, melt down the resistance to the other person, and gave her the inner space to change her mind around the behavior of the other. She was still

reluctant but she no longer objected to the friendliness of the other, she no longer saw in it the creepy behavior of a hideous person. That change of mind made it possible for Ursula and the superintendent to work quite well together, at least on the level of consensus school reality, informing the parents about the facts, getting support for Ursula for the next school camp, and other important things that made Ursula's life easier.

The wisdom of the Process Mind. It was through the wisdom of the Process Mind that we did find the initial scene of trauma and found a deep hidden resource. When I worked with Ursula on her feeling reactions to the public accusation, she said that it made her hopeless. I lead Ursula through a Process Mind exercise from Arny Mindell that I had learned from Lily Vassiliou, and that had been of immense help for me in a similar feeling state. In the exercise (see appendix for the full content), you first find the exact place of hopelessness in the body and the energy that goes along with it, expressing it with your hands, and then the same thing for the part of you that is disturbed by the hopelessness, its place in the body, the respective energy, and the hand movement. Then you find a place on earth (either real or imagined), to which the energy of the hopelessness is native. The body finds the rhythm of this earth spot and dances it, bringing the whole person into a sentient state of awareness. Then you find the two energies in the earth spot and let them converse with one another. Ursula's earth spot was a lake in front of a beautiful mountain panorama in the morning mist. The hopelessness lived deep down in the depth of the lake, and the disturbed part, a feeling of balance, on its surface. In the slow, deep conversation between these two parts, and in the slow rhythm of Ursula's feet, that sounded like an old big drum, finally emerged a voice that said that she could relax, that she could take one thing after the other, that she could give everything time. Ursula was deeply touched by that voice. She told me that she had not known that this was a part of herself. She had been looking outside

for methods of relaxation, meditation and prayer to find it, never fully satisfied with the result, and now she saw how it was a part of her, had always been a part of her. She cried. She felt vulnerable, and, simultaneously, a spaciousness that she had not been able to feel for a long time. She could build on this inner experience, because now her body and her mind knew that it was there and available to her.

Ghost from the past. The lake she had been swimming in, and down to its ground, was the lake in front of the house of her ex-parents-in-law. The breakup of her marriage 5 years ago had been the event that had shaken her whole life to its foundations, leaving her with a pile of debris. There was still a lot of unattended and deep hurt. She had spent the last 5 years reorganizing her life, providing herself with the basic safety to be able to do her job well and be a mother to her still adolescent children, when she had to leave the family house because she did not have enough money to buy it and pay the other half to her ex-husband.

To know to which life scene the hurt and rage belonged, and to have that inner space that said to her: “take your time, it’ll all be good,” was relieving. Ursula decided to work with that other scene when the right time would come. She still suffered from the injustice of the divorce. She was still very resentful, and she began to see how she also harmed herself with the resentment against her ex-husband. In meetings her anger would inflame conflicts and paradoxically make it harder for her to take her own side and tell him what she really needed. The time would come to go deeper and to transform the feelings behind the fury. She began to see, however, how the still fiery scene in her inner life had contributed to a more rigid and warrior-like teacher’s identity than she would need.

Finding order in these inner scenes had made it possible for her to open up to tenderness towards her school children, letting it be part of her style again. Tenderness towards herself and her class had been secondary. She had been too hard on herself in the last years, and that had shown in her style of teaching sometimes. That was the grain of truth in the accusation. In courageously meeting

the accusation of “being a monster” and thoroughly extracting the information she needed for herself, she had found a resource that was of utmost importance to her: A deep place of friendship in herself that would provide spaciousness and patience to heal.

Fourth Story: Beyond Frozenness

In this story, we will see that freezing reactions are not only part of the trauma experience, but also part of its transformation. One of the most frequent emotional experiences in conflict and facilitator training was frozenness. Habitually the feeling of being frozen would go along with self-attack. Frozenness equals helplessness equals incompetence equals uselessness equals hopelessness. That was my inner equation, my inner theorem so to say. As long as I did not question the assumptions, the axioms it was built on, the process would just go its habitual way, dragging me down the drain. The assumptions were built on past experience of extreme states of helplessness and fear.

What would happen, if I questioned the underlying assumptions, if I allowed myself to not know any more what the frozenness was about, and just stayed there? On the one hand nothing. My emotional state just stayed the same. No miracle force rescued me from the stress I was experiencing.

On the other hand everything. While metaphorically holding the triggered inner child, while being there and saying: “You are afraid. It is OK to be afraid,” the rest of my personality could open up to “not knowing.” It could go into a search mode for creative solutions. I was aware of living in two parallel worlds at the same time. I repeatedly connected to my Process Mind earth spot, the place in myself where I was safe. That way I became able to hold the two worlds together, so to speak. Thinking of Hüther’s theory of fear and learning, I brought in a different basic assumption: “Your brain is trying to find a new way of dealing with that situation. You are already on your way. It’s only fear, nothing more.”

The experience of overwhelming threat requires immediate solutions. If a solution can not be found in time, the system breaks down. We have seen that. This reaction, however, became habituated in my personal history. When I was in new situations, when I learned something new and the situation was complex, I thought, I had to know immediately what to do, otherwise I would break down. I can see now how this feedback loop of thinking informed my yearning to be perfect. Imperfection and making mistakes meant that I did not know, and when I did not know I experienced the threat of the little one who had to find solutions for situations that were far too complicated for her, and who had dissociated from the fear and pain to find a solution anyway.

It was a completely new experience. It took courage and it took more patience than I was sometimes ready to have. Then I repeated the cycle of self-attack and stepped out of it again. I experienced the frozenness as thick fog in my head. My body reaction to it was stomachache. It is interesting that our enteric nervous system is also called our “second brain” (Gershon, 1999). Fear is a “gut feeling,” as is intuition. Sometimes I would have an idea and allow myself to try new things. I managed somehow to still experience the fear and do it anyway. Sometimes I succeeded. Happy me.

The cycle of building new competence initially felt not very different from the cycle of the emotional intrusion from past trauma. That was a counterintuitive realization for me.

In relationships with men who had contextual higher rank, or I experienced them to have this rank, I often got frozen. My rational brain got completely wiped out. I did not know what to say. I was not able to express my needs even when I was asked. I was just blank and frozen. “Do not bite the hand that feeds you!” was one of the sentences that I had heard in my youth, and it meant “Don’t you dare criticize me or ask something from me. If you do, I’ll show you where the door is, you can always leave.” In myself I was fighting with that voice, and I hated myself for that. I

thought I should be able to say what I think. I changed my mind around this, though. I am actually glad, that sometimes I was just quiet, and did not let my momentary emotions out. When asked, I learned to say something like: "Sorry, I cannot say any more right now, there is something, but I cannot catch it yet. I have to think about it and sort myself out."

Not knowing, not doing, not saying anything has been an immense resource of learning in the last years. Wait until an answer came, wait until I found an approach that made sense, wait until I had burned down all the emotions that did not belong in that relationship, instead of acting out. Wait until my emotions and my thinking felt congruent again. Time to ask for help, take supervision, sit with friends. I heard a lot of stories where others had been afraid, where they did not know what to do. So I was like others, not an alien.

To acknowledge "not knowing" takes courage. I have experienced it sitting in no-mans-land. I am not reacting habitually any more and I do not have a new way of doing it yet. To be patient with my own learning was and is a difficult part of my training; but also a rewarding one. A wise friend of mine who had grown up in a war zone once said to me in a group process: "Sometimes it is life-saving to be a wimp."

Building competences as a facilitator takes time. It is a thin line between the victim and the thriver⁷; a line that has to be negotiated permanently. If I do not go "out there," I will not be able to have new experiences. If I do though and feel utterly incompetent, I re-enact helplessness and hopelessness. Between the two of them there is the place of "not knowing," where new ways of thinking and acting are born.

Fifth Story: Beyond Guilt

If I tell my own history, people are shocked. However, in comparison to the immense suffering from marginalized groups all over the world, people who are oppressed every day of their lives, who have to fight for nearly everything that I take

⁷ The term used by Emetchi for the part of us that is thriving. See chapter 3.

for granted every day, my history does seem insignificant. That is how I thought. In addition to the question whether it makes sense at all to compare, that thought includes another trap: guilt. I felt guilty of my privileges. What did that guilt do to me? It made me refrain from expressing solidarity. Who was I to express solidarity? Feeling guilty, paradoxically, I contribute to the suffering of the other person, because I refrain, as I have described it in the previous chapter on the process-oriented approach to trauma. I do not take my responsibility to stand up against oppression if I could, which begins by listening, expressing solidarity, being present and sharing the pain.

I was shown how it could be different by two great women. In a group process where I was participant, I said something about the racial mixture in Brazil, where I had lived. Noel, a black indigenous Australian woman, was offended by what I said, because I had been unaware of a part of the history of Aborigine people. She said to me that what I said was a hot spot for her. We let it go at the moment but I asked her to speak again about it in a supervision session.

In the session I apologized for my insensitivity and ignorance. Noel said that what I said in the group process had been hard for her to hear. Then she told me the history of which I had been ignorant. Aboriginal people had been threatened with genocide by the English who had planned to "breed them out" as she said. Marriages had been arranged from the colonizers to mix the races. I was shocked. I had not known. It was hurtful to hear. What could I do but apologize? Share the pain, feel with her, so that she and her people must not be the only ones to carry the burden. Share my own capacity for holding pain. Be there. Listen. That is what I learned from my supervisor. This attitude does not undo the harm. It does not take away my political responsibility in the whole, concerning our world's inequality. But in that moment, it brings in the role of the involved witness instead of the uninvolved bystander, and for Noel, as she said, it made a big difference.

Sixth Story: Three Miniatures From the “Gender Front”

Communication between men and women is full of traps that are easy to fall into. We often get triggered and communication gets stuck in cycles of accusations and counteraccusations. These three miniatures of communication show some ghosts of the past and beginnings of a different kind of communication.

One. They were two students from a conflict facilitation training, assigned to do an exercise about rank. Quickly they got entangled in a hot discussion. He got enraged. She got upset. Sides were polarized and rigid within minutes. She left crying. He was left angry and puzzled. Later they found out that she was German and he was Polish. On top of the gender gap there was a war standing between them. When she was helped to breathe into her triggered feelings, she could feel the pain inside her, and the guilt she felt having German origins. She realized her self-accusation that had doubled his strong words in the argument. She had felt victimized. She understood that she actually knew nothing of him and therefore could not be sure about the motives in the background that had made him react so strongly. She could begin to discern the person in front of her from the ghost of the past that was accusing her. She could sense her body having a tendency to move slowly towards him, to meet the actual person, and he could also open up to her again. She said to him that she hardly knew him and that she did not know why they had been arguing so strongly. He said that he thought that she was a strong woman and that he trusted in her strength, which would match his energy. That was the beginning of a friendship.

Two. “What are you writing about in your diploma thesis?” she asked. “About Process Work applications in business change models,” he answered. “And you?” “I am writing about deep psychological transformation,” she said. “So you make a judgment, I reckon. For you there is deep and not so deep transformation.” She was glad that somebody else interrupted them, because she would not have

known what to answer in that moment. Later she could see the arrogance in her words, and sense the accompanying feeling of superiority. She had thought all the time that *he* was not taking *her* seriously. She sat down and wrote a long letter to her friend.

Three. “You were my cofacilitator the other day and you have not paid attention to me. I had difficulty communicating with you. It felt like you did what you wanted and you ignored me and I had difficulty coming in,” he said. “I’m sorry,” she said. “I know I was ill-prepared, just coming out of another conflict scene before we went into our facilitation. I had not done inner work to center myself after the conflict and be open again for the next situation. I was not connecting with you. You are right. I needed all my energy to be half-way present during our facilitation.” He answered, “I hate to say this, but as a man I felt bad. I should be the one who has the lead. I do not like the thought that you as a woman had the lead. You have more rank than I do in the group, people like your style and they respect you, they listen to you, I have seen that in many situations, and I feel bad about that. I know it is not in general that you have more rank than I do, but in this context you do.” She considered his words. She had different choices now: She could be offended because of the sexism in his words. She could feel guilty because she had seemingly let him down. She chose a third option. She said: “It’s true. I have a lot of rank in this group. And you know what? I love it. I feel good about it.” She smiled at him, sat back and relaxed. “I have done a huge amount of work to be at the place I am now. The work shows! I’m glad!”

The supervisor asked her what she would do if she were to make that rank useful in the moment. She thought a moment. Then she stood up and walked in his direction. “I would come over to you and say I am sorry, I let you down. I did what I could do in that moment and I know it was not my best. But I learned from it. Certainly the next time when we facilitate together, I want to take enough time to connect with you beforehand, and not engage in other conflicts if possible. I

appreciate you, your skills and your style, and I missed our collaboration as well. I think we could do better.” While she had spoken he had stood up as well, and moved in her direction. Quite emotionally he said, “I appreciate you as well. You are a very generous woman to not have reacted to my sexist words. I can see why the group respects you. I as well respect your skills and I am glad that we have other opportunities to work together.”

“You know,” she answered, “the fact that you were so honest about your feelings of being let down and wanting to have the lead, and simultaneously showed me your awareness of the sexism in your words, made it much easier for me to not be triggered.”

Seventh Story: The Transformative Story of this Paper

The history of this paper began with a shock. From one moment to the other and without any warning my initial project (which had been quite advanced already) had been wiped out because of an official rule that my study committee and I had overseen. I had been the first one to whom that rule needed to be applied. I had planned to write one paper for my diploma and for the MACFOC, writing for both programs a much bigger paper than required and translating the German paper into English. Unfortunately, in the whole process, no one ever said to me that this was not possible, and I had not been aware of the fact because it had been possible to hand in a paper at two institutions, one of them a Process Work Institute, beforehand. In the library there are many Master’s and PhD theses that are also a Diploma thesis.

When I heard the message, I could feel my body go into a shock reaction. My mind got blank, I could not really speak any more, some part of me told me that what I heard could not be true, another part said: “That is it, that is the end of your program.”

From there my former reactions would have been to either attack the person that delivered the message or attack the unjust system, my study committee, whoever I felt was responsible for it, or to give up, become hopeless and depressed.

I could see that something really had shifted in me when I was able to ask my study committee for help. I told them the facts. I asked them to help me out, because it had not been only my fault, even if I might have missed something. Asking for help is nothing easy for me, especially when the persons I ask for help are of contextually higher rank and in the role of evaluators. Obviously, my inner role of protection was established enough to make that possible and it got heard. My study committee members took their responsibility in trying to find a solution that would work for me. The first idea was to change the diploma thesis and shift its main focus more to facilitation than to inner work.

It turned out that this plan did not work. The diploma thesis had been written as a scientific dialogue and changing parts of it affected too many other parts. Statements of the involved roles in other parts of the paper would be senseless. It was just too complicated, not to talk about the translation work. I also had my diploma exams to prepare. So I went through a time of inner struggle with the project, oscillating between being reactive and grumpy, and wanting to give up and finish the MACFOC program a year later. I was exhausted and also taken ill.

In my inner scene I heard a lot of judgments that had never been made on the outside, like, "You tried deliberately to deceive the Process Work Institute, you are a fraud. I knew that you are not ready to get that degree. What you write in your diploma thesis is of no interest anyway to the MACFOC program, et cetera, et cetera." So on the one hand a part of me was given as prey to my inner monster, the "thing" that said, "You see, you are wrong, whatever you do." On the other hand there was an energetic inner process going on that did not want to give up and that tried to find a solution. Fortunately it was that part that put an end to the struggle.

Eventually I decided to write a new paper that would build on the findings of my diploma thesis. It would focus on conflict, trauma, and inner opposition, the result of which we have here now. I had read the PhD thesis of Sonja Straub (1990), *Stalking the Inner Critic and Befriending Conflict* from Joe Goodbread (2010). I wanted to stalk the destructive inner criticism that stems from past trauma. Along with this decision, I freed a lot of energy. It was amazing. What looked like a completely impossible task in the given time frame made me happy and full of energy. The new proposal was already beginning to form in my head. My study committee gave immediate positive feedback. I began the new task with an inner work exercise I found in Straub's thesis: *Sonja Straub's Inner Critic Exercise* (1990, p. 106)

1. Take a piece of paper and make six empty frames on it.
2. In the first frame draw yourself. It does not have to be an artistic drawing: a rough sketch is fine.
3. In the second frame, draw the inner critic as it approaches you.
4. In the third frame, show yourself in the middle of the confrontation with the inner critic.
5. In the next two empty frames you have the chance to find a solution to the conflict between the two of you.
6. The last picture shows you again after the whole process is completed. Do not think about it too long, but just draw it as it comes to you while drawing.

I wanted to see if this would work with the ghost of my trauma history. And it did; the result is to be seen on the next page.

WThue, 30.11.2010



Figure 6. Trauma exercise images.

As I have said before, my ghost of trauma is a faceless monolithic energy that is crashing down on me (frames 2 and 3). When I had to draw the solution in frames 4 and 5, I suddenly “knew” that the obstacle was not as solid and eternal as I had

experienced it beforehand. It could be dissolved. The image of the sun symbolizes the power of the creative, transformative, and moving energy of my Process Mind. The picture story describes in another way the process of transformation I have been explaining in the last chapters. The goal cannot be getting rid of the energy of past trauma. According to the law of energy conservation, energy can only be transformed, and not eliminated. It is to be transformed in a new form of energy. In my drawing fantasy, it would be dissolved into something that I could master, and no longer be its victim. I would be able to swim in it. Ice becomes water. Death becomes life. This paper has been an important step in this transformation process. In the process of writing I have been able to see resources of power in what had been “only” disturbing symptoms in my life.

How All These Stories Relate to Facilitator Development

All these stories show steps in the transformation process. They show how the painstaking, meticulous work of figuring out the resources that are hidden in all incongruent behavior and thoughts, in frozenness and dissociation, overcoming guilt, being an involved witness instead of an uninvolved bystander, eventually help to make conflict safer and rewarding to both parties, and to become a trustworthy facilitator (or leader). This process of burning wood over time illuminates the whole scene of the hidden forces of past abuse and trauma. It shows how it is always possible to go a step further and deeper if we give ourselves the credit and the time for our learning.

Burning my own wood meant for me not to drown any more in the destructive self-attack of my inner opponent but (a) to have the courage to really look at what was happening, (b) to go to its essence, (c) from the essence to facilitate between the attacker and that part of me that suffered from the attack, (d) to extract the piece of information that I needed for my development, (e) to make that piece of information my next goal of development, and (f) to trust in the self-organizing

process of the transformation itself, thus in the intelligence that stands behind it, the Process Mind. I became able to realize my inner state of frozenness and helplessness instead of only experiencing it, and to have the patience to wait until I found a way to get back in the flow.

In the process of leaning into the most difficult feelings and states I (and the clients I accompanied in it) not only got closer to my own core power, and began to treat myself with more respect and self-love, but I could see the results in my relationship and facilitation skills. I have learned to see the other person more as who she or he is in the very moment, instead of a mere reflection of my inner states. Habitually I would have a lot of assumptions about people. Now I want to listen to what they actually have to say, even when it might not be pleasant for me. I am much more aware of my own strength, and I can handle outer attack better. As soon as I learned to discern my inner from outer attack I came to see that the outer attack is most of the time much less destructive than the inner, and that it sometimes carries useful information for me.

One last example that shows the benefits of the work: Last week I was to supervise a group of teachers in Zurich that were in the program “Starke Lehrkräfte” (“Strong Teachers”) of Lukas Hohler and Joe Goodbread. It is a process-oriented self-facilitating leadership program for teachers. After an initial workshop that introduces content and methods, teachers follow the program with a handbook and meet in peer-groups. Once in the process of about half a year a supervisor comes for whatever support is needed in the peer-group. I came into the group and the teachers started to attack me in my role of the representative of the program. They had a lot of complaints about the time they needed for the program on top of their already full schedule, and about the setting. I listened to them, and I learned that there had been a misunderstanding: We from the team of the program had been informed that all teachers of this school had volunteered to participate in the program. I learned, however, that they had been under a lot of moral pressure from

their headmaster and thus became reactive to the whole setting of the program, although they liked the content of the handbook and thought it to be useful for themselves. What was completely new to me was my inner state. I was not reactive at all. I was not afraid. I did feel challenged but not personally attacked. I could see their side and I could frame it. I could extract the information we needed as feedback for the program. Then I could also take my side as supervisor and facilitator of the program. Given the fact that we all were there, I proposed to work on the program and I asked how they had done that beforehand, and how I could support them with its content and methods. We ended the evening having used more time than they had planned to invest and in a good mood.

The change in myself was genuine. I had not had an agenda to not being reactive. It was effortless. The inner freedom I had in that moment was a result of my burned down wood. I can see that same self-organizing process also in my clients. Seemingly from one moment to the other, you are no longer reactive to persons or situations that had made you crazy, angry, or upset. You find new ways of engaging, and you have more patience with yourself. The teacher I have written about in the third story told me just a few days ago, "Just take one step after the other!"

Chapter 6: Conclusion

First of all I want to look back at what I aimed for in this thesis. Have I answered my initial research questions? I believe so. I have made a synopsis of basic concepts about trauma and the recovery from trauma in the context of scientific research. I have introduced a process-oriented psychology approach to trauma and trauma transformation. This approach is based on the core assumptions that it is important to eventually confront ourselves with the internalized perpetrator's energy stemming from our trauma experience, and to reconnect with the unalienable power within ourselves. I have also shown that there is a teleological, self-organizing process, an immanent self-healing force in the background that pushes us to do that, and to which we can have access through process-oriented inner work. Mindell calls this deep personal field intelligence the Process Mind. In this process we develop an attitude towards ourselves and others, which is able to contain our inner diversity as well as the many different voices that come against us. This attitude offers access to different levels of processing "reality": the level of figures and facts, of making decisions and talking about practical things; the level of our emotions and affects, of our inner conflicts, of the inner theatre of diverse voices, the level of roles and ghost roles, that show themselves in the social field we are in and that have their correspondence in ourselves; and the realm of the sentient essence that underlies all our experience, where we find the core direction of our life, called the "Big U," that contains all parallel worlds of our personal daily experience. This attitude is called Deep Democracy. It is the aim of process-oriented facilitation training as much as it is an ongoing growth process. Growth is never finished.

I have compared trauma recovery to trauma transformation. I have fleshed out the effects and benefits of knowing one's own abuse history as a facilitator, theoretically as well as in various case examples, showing also what it takes to meet the internalized perpetrator's energy.

I feel I have reached my goals: I gained a cognitive understanding of my own facilitator development process. I formulated a theoretical approach to trauma and trauma transformation from the perspective of process-oriented psychology. I obtained an understanding about the benefit of the process-oriented approach to trauma and trauma transformation in the context of conflict facilitation, and I connected the theory to the concrete personal experience of conflict facilitation training and trauma transformation.

For me this paper has had its own transformative power. In understanding the process of dealing with inner opposition and finding the resources hidden in the impossible and painful moments of re-enactment, freezing, guilt and others informed by past trauma, I finally brought my thinking head to buy into the concepts that I was already sensing, thus making my experience congruent. I am able now to explain my whole self to myself, even in moments of fear, stress, and not knowing. I also see the quality of “not knowing,” which can be experienced as frozenness being accompanied by feelings of anxiety, as the search mode of my brain to find solutions that have not yet been found.

I want to renarrate a story that I read in a book by Carlos Castaneda:

As a young man, and before he became a sorcerer, Don Juan stayed for some years in a mysterious manor, forced to work hard for the owners. He did that because he wanted to protect himself from a monster he was extremely frightened of, a monster that had been chasing him already for years, and from which he had been hiding in disguise, pretending to be a woman. The monster lingered outside, about one yard from the fence of the manor. Every time Don Juan looked through the window he could see it. If the monster was to get him, he would be captured, put in chains and be a slave for the rest of his life. The other residents of the house, seven mysterious women and a young nagual (sorcerer), at times supported his fear and pretended to believe in the presence of the monster, at other times declared him to be crazy and threatened to throw him out of the house, making him beg for their protection. In difficult moments, when Don Juan felt utilized by his hosts, he would step outside and see the monster lingering, lusting after its pray, causing Don Juan to go back to hiding in the house and enduring his underdog identity.

Then, suddenly, one day, Don Juan just walked out of the house, through the fence and through the invisible line that held the monster back from the house, and he finally met the monster. And . . . nothing happened. The

monster slowly dissolved into a cloud of fog. Don Juan followed the cloud of fog until it had vanished, until nothing was left of it.

In the meantime, however, while he had stayed with his hosts, he had learned a different attitude to the tasks of daily life, he had been confronted with his bad moods, his grumpy behavior, his temper, his fear, he had cried and begged for mercy not to be expelled, he had gained detachment at times, and he had learned some skills of magic. (Castaneda, 1987, p. 171 - 182)

This story is archetypal. It is told similarly in other spiritual schools (e.g., Chödrön, 1997). The story shows how we sometimes have to spend quite some time in fear before we can confront what threatens us, only to realize then, that it is already gone, because we have changed, because we have spent time and energy to study our behavior and our attitudes towards life, that have been formed by it. The story also shows how we are already imprisoned by what we fear, while we are thinking that we protect ourselves from it.

In the context of my own history, it shows how we might have spent time not really being ourselves but living in disguise and pretending to be somebody else, before we dared to make the next step and go deeper. Also, it shows that the years we spent behind the fence were not in vain. They helped us to integrate the strength of the adversary that haunted us in our dreaming intrapersonal experience. Behind the fence we prepared ourselves, we learned the skills and attitudes we needed, and then there comes a day when it is time to step out into the world again.

I went back to the mythical reports of Castaneda because they have been one of the metaphors for process-oriented leadership development as a shamanic calling (Mindell, 1993). In the context of trauma transformation and leadership development, I find the metaphors of this story intriguing. They illustrate some of the core hypothesis of this paper:

- If I want to make myself useful in conflict and group facilitation, I do have to confront myself with the monsters, ghosts and inner opponents that stem from past hurt and trauma.

- When we avoid situations that could potentially hurt us or bring us to our edges, we might end up hurting ourselves and others.
- I may have to spend quite some time living with the feeling of fear or stress, while at the same time exploring where I get stuck, why I get stuck, what my attitudes are, how they are informed by past hurt and experiences of helplessness, who I hurt on my way and why, and experimenting with new attitudes and new behaviors. This is due to the fact that our brain is an organ that reorganizes itself according to how we use it, and every learning is accompanied by controllable stress, while unlearning automatic behavior, and loosening the grip of past history is accompanied by cycles of extreme stress, where we need relationships and role models to help us provide the inner spaciousness to hold these feelings and the belief in our strength and competence, while trusting in the nature of the process.
- Nobody knows the timing of these processes. There is not a “right time” to cross the fence and there is not a “right time” to stay in the house. However, behind our striving to become facilitators there might be an organizing principle that is larger than our everyday self. It is like a push from behind into the most impossible situations, while simultaneously connecting us to the inalienable power that nobody can ever take away from us.
- One day it is over. We go back to “normal.” We step out. The fear has gone and the monsters fade away when we walk through them.
- Then we can start again . . . meeting what comes next

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Appendix

Inner Work for Conflicts That Trigger Traumatic Experience (Arny Mindell)

From a supervision session 5/8/09 with Lily Vassiliou

1. a) Go deeply into the difficult feeling (fear, anger, hopelessness)
 - b) Make a hand movement that expresses the energy of the feeling.
 - c) Make a quick sketch of the energy on a piece of paper.
2. a) Who or what inside of you is disturbed by that feeling?
 - b) Make a hand movement that expresses this energy.
 - c) Make a quick sketch of the energy on a piece of paper.
3. a) Where in your body is the difficult feeling (1.) situated?
 - b) Find a place on earth that corresponds to that feeling.
 - c) Go to that place. Find the two energies (1. & 2.) there. Find something on that earth spot for each of the energies that expresses them.
4. a) Shape shift. Become that place yourself.
 - b) And while you hold this "shape" go back to the difficult feeling, go to that side of the polarity. What does it have to say in that environment?
 - c) Then move to the other side, the recipient of the difficult feeling. Speak from that side and spot. What does it tell or reply?
 - d) Move several times from one side to the other, let a dialogue emerge.

In these steps you can find the healing or mothering energy in you, you were missing in the initial trauma situation. In the present (as an adult) you have the resources to mother (father) yourself (Lily Vassiliou).