

BEAUTIFUL TRUE NATURE
PROCESSMIND PRACTICES FOR EARTHLINGS ON THE JOURNEY

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Introduction

Oh Mystery, you are alive,

I feel you all around.

You are the fire in my heart,

you are the holy sound.

You are all of life;

it is to you that I sing.

Grant that I may see you

always,

in everything.

Jeremy Geffen, "Mystery,"
on Missa Gaia by Paul Winter

Beautiful true nature: that's you, it's me, it's the vanishing ice shelf, the persistent mosquito, and everything else that's part of the earth and the universe as we know it. If this isn't your usual feeling, I hope it will feel more comfortable when you've completed this workshop-in-a-book. This writing is intended to offer a Process Work-based portal for entering into the awareness that there is nothing that needs to be changed, only a path that can be found and walked in the course of living one's life. We are already fine. We may be a frustrating or lost version of fine, but that takes nothing from our essential true nature, our innate unique just-so-ness.

We will look at the concept of Processmind in three sections: in Part 1 we'll take up two questions, what is Processmind? How can we learn to put Processmind awareness into practice? Part Two presents a workshop and class I offered to introduce people to everyday applications of Processmind practice, including a number of exercises for employing Processmind awareness. Processmind practices are the centerpiece of this study. We'll look at how they can be applied for personal inner work, in relationships, in workplace challenges, and in the world channel, on environmental and international issues. Along the way I will share experiences for using Processmind in our everyday lives. Finally, Part 3 considers further Processmind work which I did not take up in the workshop, but which I consider to be worth sharing.

In taking up this path of Processmind, which we will see is a method for awakening awareness of what is deepest in ourselves and meeting the greater process which is unfolding, we are joining a tradition as old as *homo sapiens*, or older. Throughout our tenure on earth people have sought ways of maintaining a sense of what is important and what has true power. The art painted on the walls of inner sanctums thousands of years ago is interpreted by current researchers as the oldest known portrayals of the human need for a sense of order and of self-transcendence. The caves were evidently the sites of highly significant rites of passage, with animal figures thought to stand in the places held by the gods of later generations. Today mosques, synagogues, temples and churches replace those caves to represent the same human endeavors to create a sense of order, and to move both inward and beyond ourselves. Universally, humans have continued to use rites of

passage to both create and to connect with their society's sense of cosmic meaning, as well as to connect the individual with her¹ place in that society.

Naturally, we continue to ask, "How can I stay grounded in the midst of life as it swirls around me? How can I make decisions that are true to myself and beneficial to myself and others?" We might even be bold enough to ask, "How does the world work? Is there meaning?" If we undertake such big questions, we run the risk of hitting a wall: each society seems to define meaning differently, and some have come to feel that religions offer only very relative answers to their most demanding questions. Yet today there are many who venture into such questions without a traditional path to offer guidance.

¹ I will use gender pronouns randomly throughout.

PART I

Chapter 1

Processmind: The Earth-Path That Cannot Be Spoken

If we think of ourselves as coming out of the earth, rather than having been thrown in here from somewhere else, we see that we are the earth; we are the consciousness of the earth. These are the eyes of the earth. And this is the voice of the earth.

--Joseph Campbell

What, then, is this “Processmind” all about? How is it both from the earth and a means of connecting with what is deepest in ourselves? Why does it merit serious consideration as a potentially profound practice?

I count myself among those who have tasted of several traditions because their members seem to enjoy peace, find meaning, and appear to love one another and care about our world. Each of these has offered me good sustenance in some respects. None has answered the big questions thoroughly. Nor should they be expected to succeed at that in a way that works for everyone, since it's impossible to speak to the differing realities of billions of individual incarnations from different cultures and histories. This is the reason there are thousands of spiritual traditions on earth.

The diversity of our languages and traditions over the face of the earth is also one of the reasons the Processmind approach is so appealing and effective. Processmind is a presence-based response to our collective human need for tranquility and ease in the face of life's challenges and mystery. One need only be a person who is of the earth clan to practice Processmind awareness as a means of finding one's own path and peace at any given moment.

Each of us comes here invested with the ineffable, Life itself, and owes our being to that mysterious occurrence. Life is the greatest of mysteries, and life's source. We can talk and analyze, compete and war over the legitimacy of our belief systems regarding what is, ultimately, unknowable; or we can opt not to engage in nailing "God" down with words, which might be considered the ultimate form of crucifixion, and rather choose to engage in living a more conscious life than analyzing it too finely. Each of us organisms has its own life to live on this earth, and its own beautiful true nature; beyond that, not much can be said with surety without entering into conceptualizations of the mind. Instead, we each need to find our own paths in the earthly bodies we inhabit, no matter what creeds we do or don't believe. And yet, I also am a great respecter of the importance of the rites of passage that strengthen us for the trip through human life. Traditions that point out helpful guideposts will always be useful and necessary.

Process Work's concept of Processmind, developed by Arnold Mindell, speaks to our basic earthliness. Mindell acknowledges the human need for direction, for following one's path, and invites us to use the most timeless and universal element of human life as a guide: the Earth on which we live. Here we have what we need, he suggests, if we can simply learn to attend to the earth's moment-to-moment signposts for each of us.

“Processmind” is Mindell’s term for the mysterious, Tao-like base that supports what we see in our world. His word suggests that there is consciousness (“mind”) behind the constantly unfolding process known as life, and that tuning in to Processmind offers a simple, direct, non-conceptual means of moving through our lives. The word Processmind captures both the process that seems to have a mind or intelligence behind it, and the mind (or Mind, to suggest transcendence along with immanence) that expresses itself in the process that is the universe. In this approach, the word Processmind holds the sense of all that is arising in the universe, as well as the orderliness-amid-chaos scientists can observe, which may betray a consciousness, or what we humans might call a *mind*, behind it all.

Processmind practice, then, puts this trust in a background order to work by asking our Earth for its guidance and support as we go through our lives. Processmind (PM) is non-conceptual; no allegiance to a belief system or any rational premise is required, only a willingness to experience things directly in the present moment.

Much more can and will be said about Processmind’s meaning and how we can tap in to it. Yet it refers to the same unspeakable reality as does the word Tao; and just as “the Tao that can be spoken is not the eternal Tao,” it is necessarily impossible to capture in words the essence of Processmind. It’s best to use the practices you’ll find in Mindell’s work, here, and elsewhere to discover what is meant.² Experience will move you closer to understanding, and concepts can sometimes get in the way of the deeper understandings. Like meditation, reading about it only goes so far. Meditating teaches meditation, as practicing asanas teaches yoga. It can be beneficial to release ourselves from mental constructs at times.

² Arnold, Mindell, in publication process, 2009.

In each of the following chapters I will discuss an application of Processmind practice. The practices actually used in the classes and workshop contain vignettes of participants' experiences. In the final two chapters I offer my thoughts for extending Processmind's potential application into the environmental arena which I call earthwork, and, finally, into worldwork by combining powerful Buddhist and shamanic transformative traditions under the influence of Processmind.

Chapter 2

An Earth-Based Path

Hear me, four quarters of the world – a relative I am! Give me the strength to walk the soft earth, a relative to all that is! Give me the eyes to see and the strength to understand, that I may be like you.

With your power only can I face the winds.

Black Elk, Oglala holy man

Mindell's Processmind also serves one of the most profound needs of our time in that it can help keep us in right relationship to the Earth. As many traditions have done, it offers a reliable means of guidance. This path does so through the means most basic to us: our bodies and the Earth. When have we ever needed Gaia-guidance more than we do now, as a species that is losing touch with our mother ship? To be out of touch with the earth is a relatively new and terribly dangerous phenomenon in human history, and it demonstrates a potentially fatal arrogance. We are well advised to remember her, listen to her, and follow her guidance now.

Shamans and earth-based traditions all over the planet place a great deal of meaning on the messages of animals, wind, rain, waters, land forms, and so on. Native Americans have survived by holding totem animals in close familiarity, gleaning from them how to live harmoniously with the land in which they live. Their practices often honor the wisdom of a signal received (especially in trance) from an animal elder. They believe that the animals on whom they depend and with which they share territory ought to be honored

for knowing and teaching the topography of the place – for knowing and showing how to live and to thrive in that specific land. The Native American people could recognize that the animal world predated the arrival of humans in every spot; they had established patterns of migration, hibernation, predation and peaceful coexistence that permitted a certain morphostasis in their environment. Animals’ “knowing” had much to teach the human late-comers. Names and tribal totems derive from these time-worn practices, and many contemporary seekers train in shamanic work in order to develop the needed attunement.

As is true for animals, an internal coherence regarding survival practices tends to develop over the course of thousands of years, among people who have occupied the same lands more or less continuously. They come to know the ecology of the place. We humans are wise when we learn to live within the balance that has been established over the millenia, rather than intruding upon it as dominators. But these are times of non-earth-based knowing, of gathering information online, without reference to the earth. Many of us have come to live without a sense of connection with the natural, earthy world around us in some of the important ways humans have done in the past.

So, sometimes we need to be stunned into awareness. Here’s an example from my own life.

My most direct experience of a shamanic path occurred on a retreat near Chicago. After a few days of work on totemic awareness and connecting, I had set out for a walk. My intention was to head into the woods, but I was magnetically and irresistibly drawn toward a less visually beautiful direction. Within fifty yards, just off the lawn of the retreat house, I encountered the mostly-stripped, antlered head of a deer. I was instantly moved, as I had

had a strong image of a deer-person during a movement exercise the evening before. I decided to enter into one of the transformative practices that we had been doing, breathing deeply and quickly, while loosening my relationship to myself and opening to the deer-presence. This took me into an altered state for some time. As I began to return to some awareness of consensus reality, I found that my arms had risen and become contorted (by anoxia, perhaps like the Magdalenian shaman initiates we'll discuss later) into a shape like antlers. I became aware that I was with and in and become the deer through my conscious intention to deeply know it. Having removed myself from concepts of "deer" and "me" as separate, I had begun to enter into deer nature.

Eventually, I took up the deer head and began to look around; within a few steps I encountered deer tracks and followed them to the deer's watering place. An aspect of process work's shamanic heritage is its orientation being open to more than the eyes alone can see. After having followed the deer's trails to its watering grounds, still somewhere between my ordinary reality and the influence of the deer-state, I returned to the retreat house and glanced toward the room where the retreat had resumed. "Oh, the humans are dancing," I heard myself mutter, more deer than human in that moment.

Jean Houston, the brain researcher and cultural anthropologist who was conducting that workshop, commented that the deer (now known familiarly as Dear Hart to me, as I am Deer Heart to the deer) had ordained me a shaman, and my experience of dissolution into deer-being was a part of that process. Trusting my totem animal to guide me has become a revered habit, so that when I'm driving in the country and contemplating my life and its questions, I may see a deer (and sometimes, I'll ask to see a deer), and am able to interpret its movements or attitude in relation to the question at hand. Once, for instance, I was

ambling up a road in Montana at the beginning of a relationship, wondering about some of the challenges involved and whether to continue to pursue the new relationship. Suddenly, a large deer vaulted out from the scrub brush next to me, and with a huge leap it had crossed my rocky path and sprang many yards ahead, its white tail seeming to announce its passage. For me, the message was really clear: that I should vault into this, use my natural strength to deal with the obstacles, and fearlessly move forward.

The shaman arises from the earth and lives closely with her. In its way, the deer encounter was a profound initiation into Processmind awareness and the earth-path, or “Beautiful True Nature.” Opening to what is simply and beautifully itself, whether deer or waterfall, snowy owl or wisp of wind, in the direct encounter with what is true and natural we can become conscious that much is arising beyond our limited concepts. Being present, we can be aware of what rises up in us as feelings, movements, ideas, abilities, and even dreams. Being truly awake, we can bring forward whatever the situation evokes from us, personally, without attachment or judgment. We can be in the process that is unfolding here and now, and also, simultaneously, yield to the mind or consciousness that has mysteriously awakened this awareness, this idea, this feeling. Apart from the claims of the consensus reality or the primary identity, without elaboration, imposition, or ornamentation, we can be active participants in what is.

Jung referred to the totality of stored awareness as the “collective unconscious” that carries us forward, in spite of ourselves. I think the word Processmind bespeaks the always-unfolding nature of the cosmos as well as the sense that there is somehow a mind or consciousness behind it, without calling it either “the mind of God” or, in a more scientific vein, just the long-habituated patterns of the universe. Unattached to

denominations or concepts, Mindell means to invite us to enter into the process available in *this* place at *this* moment and surrender to its guidance and support.

Chapter 3

Living on the Earth

**When you stand with your two feet on the ground,
you will always keep your balance....**

See the world as your self.

Have faith in the way things are.

Love the world as your self;

then you can care for all things.

--Lao Tsu

Imagine yourself suddenly standing on the moon, assigned to explore its surface and then, after exploration, needing to return to this original spot so the lunar shuttle can pick you up. How will you get back to this spot? Here you are in a totally unfamiliar place, with no knowledge of the landscape. As you walk about, you'll need to keep a close eye on the landforms you pass so you can retrace your route. You'll also need to keep them in the right order and remember when to go right or left in relation to each one. A mnemonic device might be useful here – a song or rhyme you make up to help bring you back alive. I hope we'd have the composure, wits and intuitive wisdom to do it!

We learn that our ancestors in the archaic aboriginal traditions felt the pulls of the Earth and got information from the signs all around them. Australian aboriginals can still travel according to the songlines, or “footprints of the ancestors,” their long-held song-stories about the features of their land that guide the initiated traveler safely across open country. The land forms were said to have been assigned powers and mythic stories by the totemic beings of long ago who they believe sang the world into existence. These dream-figures

of Aboriginal tradition named whatever crossed their paths, and their “songs” are cautionary tales about the importance of respecting the earth’s powers, and guidance for doing so. They sing of Nurunderi and the Wihalu Women and Wat-Urdli, creatures of the Dreamtime³ who long ago went to sleep in the spots on the earth where they’re still sung about. Their mythic role supports the belief system of the people, and their landforms conduct them across the outback from one dream figure to another by “singing up the country.”⁴ Their system is ingenious, and essential to survival. Songlines are for these Aborigines the universal means of navigation, informing their inner life as a cosmology about their origins and the essence of their land, while also mapping the geography of the outside world for purposes of safe travel.

Process takes time

Can we humans continue to allow ourselves to depend on the earth itself, as animals have always done? These are times of mostly non-earth-based knowing, of gathering information without reference to the Earth. We don’t tend to live with the natural, earthy world around us as humans have done in the past. How will we survive as a species if we abandon our relationship to our home, in its native reality, its essential true nature? Terry Tempest Williams relates a lesson from prairie dogs: "I watched prairie dogs every day rise before the sun, stand with their paws pressed together facing the rising sun in total stillness for up to thirty minutes," says Williams. “And then I watched them at the end of the day take that same gesture. Thirty minutes before the sun goes down they would press their palms together in perfect stillness. I don't mean to anthropomorphize, but when you

³ Mountford, and Roberts, 1973

⁴ Chatwin, 1988

look at a creature that has survived over the millennium begin and end each day in that kind of stance, it causes one to think about one's own life and the speed and rapidity in which we live.”⁵



I had the chance to lie in bed for a while this morning – and I took it. I perused the day ahead, aware of what needs doing, who I want to talk with, messes needing cleaning, and all that. Soon I’d hiked, mentally, beyond all that and could simply feel how I wanted to approach the day, and where peace lay inside me.

I basked in the sun’s power to wake me to life, and birdsong, rain pelting the house, and in quiet when it came. Yum.

My body came along: more alert, and yet deeply relaxed, breath still deep and easy like it had been while I slept, muscles loose and quiet. Stephen Levine proposed “soft belly” as the condition to be attained for true awareness. Once the abdominal muscles are totally relaxed, he says,⁶ so is the entire body. The body’s state had helped take me inward

⁵ Williams, p. 190

⁶ Levine. 1991, p. 36.

despite knowing that many jobs lay ahead. It is very natural and terribly important to learn to be in quiet.

It's interesting to me that we call it "spirituality" when we quiet ourselves and go inward. Many spiritual traditions hold in common this focus on body-based and earth-based awareness. Why, then, is it called "spiritual"? Why the distinction between ordinary life and this state? I ask this of the Buddha I'm looking at and he responds with silence. Truly there's not a lot to be said to this, but so much *has* been said!

The usefulness of going inward can't be overstated, no matter what it is called. Every day millions all over the earth intentionally take time for silent awareness of what is and of what lies in their own hearts. Some turn it into a prayer to that Mystery which is beyond the self; some recite words of power to invoke attributes and mentalities they aspire to; and some walk, prostrate themselves, use beads or turn prayer wheels. Others stay still, listening to their hearts. Some turn to the earth for guidance, some to the heavens.

What matters is not what we do or what we call it, only that we yield and get out of our minds. Reciting a name of Allah prevents one from thinking selfish thoughts. Turning the prayer wheel dampens the mind's freedom to obsess about worries. Attuning the heart moves one into one's deeper self and away from the monkey mind's wanderings. Perhaps "spirituality" means "essentiality," moving toward what is deepest, truest and most authentically real and away from the busy, empty meanderings of the mind.

Similarly, the practice of Processmind helps us to tunnel under everyday preoccupations and into consciousness. Of what? Of the *process* which unfolds endlessly as consciousness, life, waters, energies, heartbeats, world conflicts, sleep and every momentary awareness. Of the *mind, or Mind*, which manifests in and as the processes we

experience. Equally available to all earthlings regardless of a faith basis (or lack of same), Processmind refers us to the underlying reality that life is going on, with its liveliness and suffering and confusion and moments of peace, and that we are in and part of it; it supports us to stand in the place where we are and feel it, know it, be in it more fully; finally, we are that same reality that we are calling Processmind. Just being there, “awake,” as the Buddha called himself, holds great potential for the possibility of being a more spacious, compassionate and real human being. On the other hand, talking about being awake is not the same as being awake; “we lose contact with the direct experiences of events the moment we count, describe, or talk about them.... That is why when the Zen monk...asked how deep the river was, his friend...threw him in the water.”⁷

The word Processmind captures a great deal, as it refers to both the process that seems to have a mind or intelligence behind it, and the Mind that expresses itself in the process that is the universe.

The Deepest Part of Yourself

Processmind starts with our embodiedness and invites us to follow that channel, allowing it to connect us to the Earth’s pull on us individually, and to draw insight and direction from that information, from being in-formed by our earth-based knowing. The practice of Processmind can help keep us in right relationship to the Earth. As many traditions have done, it offers a reliable means of guidance. It does so through the means most basic to us: our bodies and the Earth.

This approach requires no allegiance to a belief system or any rational premise, only a willingness to experience things directly in the present moment. We simply connect with

⁷ Mindell, 2000, p. 41.

the place that feels deepest in ourselves – for some the heart-mind center, for others the solar plexus, for others, perhaps, the toes! Once we’re feeling centered there, we allow ourselves to be turned in the direction that naturally draws us right now. Once there, we sense into a connection with a place on the Earth that speaks to us. “If you relate to the earth -- if you sense its compass – you cannot be lost for long.”⁸

Arnold Mindell said of this aspect of Processmind practice, “Asking about the deepest part of you in your body at any moment is a non-cognitive, and purely proprioceptive and intuitive approach to the essence realm. When you ask yourself such a feeling kind of question, something responds. It takes self-appreciation to follow those responses. If several places turn up, then let the unknown choose one of them. And associate that to some earth kind of experience. What makes something feel deep? That is a body question, which only your individual body can answer. It’s like asking, what is love? Each of us has a special feeling.”⁹ The “something” that responds is our own Big U in its essential connection with Processmind as its mysterious underpinning. This is the essence or core of any experience, and of our being, as being is only experienced a moment at a time.

Mindell began to write about the “little u” and the “Big U” in his Earth-Based Psychology. The big U, he says, “is the sum of all your parallel world and contains the major direction of your life...the core of who you are.”¹⁰ Here parallel worlds are those diverse perspectives (observer and observed, for instance) and possibilities (moving in one direction or the other, encountering different options leading in different directions) which make our lives add up to be as they are, or seem to be. Our “little u,” on the other hand,

⁸ Mindell, 2007, p. 78

⁹ Mindell, private correspondence, Jan. 2009

¹⁰ Mindell, 2007, pp. 43-44.

refers to a perspective of being simply the one who goes through life without considering more than the consensus level of one's life.

After having articulated these concepts Mindell explored the vastness of consciousness, into what might be called the mythic realm. What drives the universe? What permits and perhaps causes each of us to be who we are, in the mythic sense, that is beyond or beneath the personal Big U? These questions resulted in an understanding that the universe is a sentient being which is "nonlocal" (pervading the cosmos without a fixed location), "lies at the root of consciousness, and precedes all manifestations."¹¹ What is beyond and deeper than even the Big U self, then, is what we are calling the Processmind level of reality, and the essence of every individual being and form in the universe derives from this origin. Mindell extrapolates from this that when we tap into our own essence we are getting in touch with the whole of being

In my initial Processmind flights I delighted to find myself traveling across the world to a different spot each day, each one bringing me to useful guidance. I found myself expanding from the inside out into the world. I was on a kind of spiritual high, happy to have a method that was free of the constraints of any formalized spirituality. In my case, I have often traveled internally to different parts of the world, drawn by some unconscious process. I might see the world around Mt. Fuji, as I join into that scene; or I might find myself being led to my parents' home in rural New York, with all the personal, ecological and historical meaning it carries. Yesterday I found myself experiencing Rwanda's reality: its heat, its devastation, the bones of its people strewn about by genocidaires, survivors still grieving, children struggling to thrive, many animal species lost in the shuffle. The essence I experienced in that place spoke of the power to struggle and recover, the furious

energy of life to remain animate. At other times I've tapped into the familiar scene of Crater Lake, full of paradoxes and rich with potential.

Soon I learned to use Processmind awareness as a means of working with questions arising in my daily life. How will I respond to this client's needs? Where can I find guidance about dealing with my children? What does the earth have to say about my finances? I have done this for years with the deer as my totemic animal, but this method provides an earth-based approach without needing to be in deer country

Processmind incorporates elements of earth-based magnetism together with one's own projections and memories about a place on the earth. The combination of internal wisdom (tapped via going to the deepest spot in the body), and openness to the enhancement of what the earth has to say about a situation, is fairly marvelous to me. There's a genius in permitting these associations, sometimes very personal, other times quite popular, and sometimes even off-the-map and out of our own consciousness, to be one's source of guidance.

The practice of Processmind is related to many ancient traditions while respecting our ability to discern what's of the essence in these traditions. Hence Mindell has translated his sense of the greater Tao, the great unfolding of the cosmos with discernable patterns and apparent intelligence, into a usage that is accessible to all earthlings. We only need open up to the earth as an advisor on our concerns, starting from an awareness of the deepest part of ourselves, and listen for the truth of the day. It's lovely, non-binding, cholesterol-free, and builds strong spirits in mysterious ways. When we surrender to something that's apart from the linearity of our rational minds, we are yielding to the greater wisdom of the universe and relaxing our often tight grip on our lives.

¹¹ Mindell, 2007, p. 16.

Each and every earth-spot contains all the energies and dynamics of life, if we drill down far enough. A flower-strewn meadow might be the haunt of wolves, or it might foster poisonous species amongst the charming wildflowers; it might be the result of a mountain's eruptive power, or it could bear the traces of the brutal winter out of which it has been reborn. Each place holds that which is unseen alongside that which is seen.

We visit places on the earth in this Processmind manner as sources of awareness, and as spaces into which we surrender our secular identities. We may go to discover what unanticipated aspect will "flirt" with us, bringing in useful, expanding information for today's questions.

Chapter 4

Processmind and Archetypes

No individual exists in their own nature, independent of all other factors of life. Each has the totality of the Universe at their base. All individuals have, therefore, the whole Universe as their common ground, and this universality becomes conscious in the experience of enlightenment, in which the individual awakens into their own true all-embracing nature.

--Lama Govinda

The practice of what Mindell calls Processmind seems to be closely related to the role of archetypes in Jungian psychology. The contents of the collective unconscious are called archetypes. Jung also called them dominants, imagos, mythological or primordial images, and a few other names, but archetypes seems to have won out over these. An archetype is an unlearned tendency to experience things in a certain way that serves our human wish for understanding how life works. An archetype might embody power, compassion, eros, evil, or any aspect of life. The archetype has no form of its own, but it acts as an "organizing principle" on the things we see or do. Archetypes serve to organize, direct and inform human thought and behavior.

The ancients called archetypes "elemental spirits." Jung found archetypal patterns and images in every culture and in every time period of human history. They behaved according to the same laws in all cases, since humans do not have separate, personal

unconscious minds but rather share a collective (un)conscious(ness.). So, for instance, the archetype of Father behaves similarly across all the mythic stories of fathers within the realm of a given culture; it might even have been thought that it would be the same among all of humanity, though anthropological studies have since broadened our frame of reference about the realities of different societies.

Consistent with the teachings of the Vedas, Jung observed that the mind is rooted in the great unconscious, the ground of being, just as a tree is rooted in the ground. Carol Whitfield¹² describes what Jung called the Universal Unconscious in dream images. Imagine that you're having a dream that involves many forms of life – a landscape with plants, animals and humans. Perhaps they are all visible and interacting until your alarm goes off, when suddenly they are gone, just like that, but our dreaming self remains, still here, fundamentally unaffected by the disappearance of the dream figures. In the same way, she suggests, we humans come and go, but the ground of our beings, Being itself, is unchanged by our passage.

So Jung is saying that while there may be much that is unique to our historical experience and could only have happened to us, it is shaped according to universal patterns, or archetypes. If we humans have the courage to seek the source that “dreams” us up, we can discover many universal patterns. The directories of the cosmic computer are filled with the myths of the human species.

The Earth as Archetypal

Historical versions of archetypal models have relied on idealized humans. In the use of Processmind as a personal resource, we are guided to archetypal earth-based (as opposed

to human-like) impressions and can learn to use them as models that exemplify the attributes we may need in a given situation. In this way, Mindell honors the millions of years of evolution that have created the land forms appropriate to each place. Where the waters collide with the earth, a certain mutual encounter occurs; earth yields a tiny bit of itself as it withstands the ocean's constant pounding. Elsewhere, flatness and heat combine to yield brilliant solutions, such as undemanding cacti and lizards; and mountains provide us with rocky challenges, snowmelt for rivers, and a profound symbol of endurance. We can easily find something that speaks to us about life in each of these environments.

Without conscious effort, a place on the earth which we may or may not have visited will turn up to embody what we need, although at first blush it may not be clear what it brings us. What we need for this endeavor is to trust in the genius of what physics calls "the field" of what is unfolding, and what Jung called the "collective unconscious." What is this? Perhaps it should be called the intelligence or overall dynamic, what Mindell would call the "vector," direction, or the Big U, beneath our personal life experience. In other words, the spot we are drawn to reveals something about how we fit into the whole of what is unfolding at any given time.

No place on this earth has always been as we know it now. Each spot has its own character, history and mysterious essence. Who knows how it wants to contribute to our unfolding in this moment? Being open to being "found" by a spot on a particular occasion, whether a familiar, beloved place or an unexpected site, permits us to trust in the primal power of the earth itself. It meets our human need for surrender to that which is

¹² Whitfield, 1997.

mysterious, no matter how familiar, and which has its own order, no matter how obscure to our eyes.

Consider your favorite places and why they are special to you. What do you feel there? What do they do to you? What do they mean to you? How do they touch and connect with your own beautiful true nature? When you are pulled to one of these places you will be touched in a particular way. Some aspect of the place, large or minute, may appeal to you. Something about it may offer you guidance. Feeling pulled to a glacier, you may discover a place in yourself that responds to its quiet movement onward, or its letting go of parts of itself as it calves. Magnetized toward a beautiful beach, you might connect with the abundance and ease of being that seems to be there, or maybe the sinister threats hiding within the blue depths. What comes will have a very personal meaning for you; going into what you've found may reveal something important for your life today.

Processmind Practice

Processmind practice is a method of self-growth, strength-building and leadership based on internal knowing. Processmind is eminently personal, then, and yet deeply earth-based. In an amazing way it takes us inside ourselves and then immediately connects us to our earth-home. And it does so by encouraging us to yield to the process of the present moment and the unknown wisdom available through trusting the earth. The brilliance of this strange word, Processmind, lies in its ability to capture the mind-like nature of the process that is always unfolding as the universe, and the process-like reality of what that "mind" seems to express.

Processmind's potential to unfold new dimensions of personal guidance, awareness, and interconnectedness can best be proven in our own lives only by our own practice. It's my hope that each of us will seek and find where on Earth our deepest truth and power lie and allow ourselves to encounter in ourselves and the earth the beautiful true nature we share.

Processmind in Action

As an example, I would like to share an event from my own experience. The unexpected, powerful effect of Processmind struck me powerfully during a large group process on sexism and patriarchy during Worldwork¹³ 2008 in London. Facilitator Lily Vassiliou opened the session by inviting us to enter deeply into Processmind via this earth-based visualization method, encouraging us to slowly connect to our own centers, and then to an earth spot, and finally, to become that earth spot we encountered. I found myself yielding to the beauty, depth and potency of Crater Lake in Oregon, allowing my sense of selfhood to disintegrate into the watery scene.

Although it is one of the world's deepest natural lakes, Crater Lake is still. Its only sources of inflow are mountain springs deep in the earth. Large as it is, it is nonetheless quite crystal-clear to its nearly 2000-foot depths. And while its crater was formed through a powerful volcanic eruption, today its surface reflects the sky with sharp accuracy. Situated in the midst of Oregon's Cascade Mountains like an aquamarine wrapped in a nest of moss, its waters seem to have stilled any eruptive energy it may once have held.

¹³ Worldwork is an experiential training seminar in conflict work and community building (worldwork.org/worldwork.html)



As scientists at Mt. St. Helens have observed, the eruption of 1980 has been followed by a continuing period of lava upsurge leading to the creation of a new dome. Crater Lake's second-growth “dome” is known as Wizard Island – the highest point created by the lava flow in the crater formed after Mt. Mazama erupted 7700 years ago. So I saw Crater Lake representing depth, brilliant clarity, mysterious uprisings, an earthy embrace, and a latent potential for huge, violent eruptions.

Only some of this was in my mind on this particular London morning -- the clarity, the emergence of an island of mystery and serenity named “Wizard,” the lovely arboreal setting. I felt my selfhood yield to this spot more than ever before in my Processmind experiences; I dissolved into water, its natural absence of boundaries, its native fluidity, its freedom of being; and soon this sense expanded beyond the lake itself to include the entire setting, the whole Crater Lake place-identity, its ancient, interconnected ecology, the simplicity of just being, water, sky, tree, skunk, ant, cloud, Wizard Island.

We were encouraged, as is usual in process work, to return to our Processmind as needed during the ensuing group session.

After a sorting process¹⁴, the 400 participants decided to take on the topic of sexism and patriarchy. We launched in quickly, with one bold man stepping forward to take the role of the one who doesn't want or need to hear from women, proving this by taking up a preternatural amount of physical and psychological space as he strutted around the central arena.

A woman's voice came through another microphone saying that she wanted to speak from her fresh experience of the previous day's small group, where her joyful dancing had been met with brash and overtly sexual harassment from one of the male group members. She spoke from her pain to the man who was in the role and then to the actual person who had so freely insulted and disrespected her. With some mixed shame, role-taking and frankness, this man now claimed his part and began to describe his crime against women, saying (in the larger role of male power) that he loves "to take and take," in keeping with his dominance and patriarchal entitlement. In this potent format, he spoke for the colonizer whom we had seen abusing power over aboriginals and the land they cared for, as well as for men who dominate individual women. He and the woman he had attacked had some words back and forth. Then he returned to his theme: "I take and take!" he shouted, half self-accusingly, half proud of his privileged status.

Although I wasn't quite sure why, I had felt pulled toward the process in the center with the sense that I needed to be there to experience some sort of healing of my marginalized but real anger toward men based on my ex-husband's having abandoned me and our

¹⁴ Sorting is a Process Work term referring to the selection of a topic for a group process using the principle of deep democracy, or listening to all the voices involved.

children many years before. Suddenly, I was taken over by the time-spirit of what was occurring and I took the mike, breaking into their scene: "Yes! You take and take! You took yearst of my life from me! You called it a marriage, but you treated me without respect, raping me, pretending at something I took as sacred. You were playing! You took and took, then walked away and never looked back. You just left me, and you abandoned our children!!" Crying and shaking in my now-altered state, I screamed out my hurt and anger. "You played at marriage like a game, abusing your privilege, leaving me with all the responsibility!" The offender continued to look at me without words. Others had joined him by now, stepping into sharing the role in a joint effort to bring some healing to this tragically classic scene of "man's inhumanity to woman."

Among them I saw Zbyszek, a fine Polish man I knew slightly from the small group where we were both members. He had spoken wisely there, so I saw him as someone I respected and whose integrity and unusual depth of understanding I trusted. Calmly he spoke into the mike and captured my attention. "I hear you," he assured me. "I hear you." I nodded wordlessly, stunned and grateful to receive his warm connection in the midst of my overwhelmed state. "What can I do for you now?" he asked, taking the male role with humility and caring. Still shaking and altered, I saw and heard this beautiful male voice; I felt his heart and knew the truth of his spirit. I spoke to him personally, crying out what was vital to me: "Be there for the children!" I cried and sobbed and yelled. "Just be there for the children! Be there for the children!" "Zbig," as he called himself in this English context, my friend, my good knight, heard me. "I will," he said, softly and deeply. "I will, I will."

The process continued from there, but for a bit I collapsed into the arms of the unknown women who had been literally supporting me, their hands on my shoulders and my back. They stroked me now, reminding me to breathe, and soon helped bring me back in.

Before leaving Worldwork I thanked the young man who had carried the time-spirit of the “sexist jerk,” for taking that heinous role. “Let's be the people we can be,” I said in parting, and he smilingly agreed.. Then I found Zbig. We hugged, sharing a sense of the roles we had played out for the large group, but also for ourselves. "Thank you," he whispered in my ear, “for giving me the chance to say that.” “Thank you for being there, for being someone I could trust in that moment," I confided. “I will always remember you." The healing his compassionate presence afforded me will always be immeasurably valuable to me.

Only later that night did I realize how well this event embodied (literally, in my body) the Crater Lake Processmind into which I had surrendered my selfhood on that particular day. Crater Lake-mind took over in that scene, even if it's not self-evident. One would have to know how long I had held that powerful pain deep underground; how placid and deep I had come to appear; and how I had worked to transform my rage into wisdom, as the volcano forged Wizard Island. You'd need to have seen how I had become like a reflecting pond, as a therapist, a person of thoughtfulness and capacity, able to give back a sharp and clear view of whatever passes over. You would have to know how the arms of the women who touched and held me were like the wooded lands around Crater Lake, and that I have always relied on their love. And you'd have to hear me admit that something had boiled deep underground for so long that it didn't seem to be part of my identity -- but was always dormantly present. Perhaps the easiest part to grasp is that from the wreckage of

that explosion emerged a Wizard, Zbyszek, who happens to bear a strong resemblance to Albert Einstein.

This scene illustrates the power of the Processmind in its own right, that is, without having a conscious intention to “use” it for a purpose. Although I had found and entered deeply into a Crater Lake identity, once I was involved in the group process I did not consciously invoke that earth spot again. I wasn't actively aware of what was arising, but the manner in which my long-held placidity was broken by a seismic eruption, and the way that contributed to the temporary resolution of the male-female conflict, has its own validity and consistency with everything I know of Crater Lake. For me it serves as a forceful reminder to trust Processmind itself, and especially the potential to unfold healing and resolve conflicts when one is intentionally aligned with that spot on earth that has reached out to us today. We may be surprised to discover what secrets it contains, perhaps marginalized from our own awareness.

Chapter 5

Processmind and Your Personal Life

This being human is a guesthouse.

Every morning, a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness.

Some momentary awareness comes as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!

Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,

who violently sweep your house

empty it of its furniture

still, treat each guest honorably.

They may be clearing you out

for some new delight.

The dark thought the shame, the malice

meet them at the door laughing,

and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,

because each has been sent

as a guide from beyond.

--Rumi, *The Guesthouse*

Even many people who have a strong relationship to the Earth still can't get out for a good walk in the natural world on a daily basis. Those living in urban condos or working all day in an environment of hard synthetic surfaces may feel far from the world we visit on summer vacations.

If you are among those who draw spiritual energy from hiking in local parks or riding wild rivers, Processmind can serve as a handy tool for tapping into the wisdom that arises

from outside your consciousness even when you aren't out connecting with the green (or brown, or blue) world that feeds you so well. Going inward with the Processmind approach can help to modulate the hard edges a busy life can produce inadvertently, especially if we aren't experiencing the often softening effect of the natural world.. Just tapping into that place in the natural world to which we've been led can naturally quiet the stresses and anxieties we carry around, whether from work, family life, or our own personal confusion-du-jour.

Self-Leadership

As singer Joan Armatrading said: "Some days the bear will eat you, some days you'll eat the bear." When we're on, we know our own rhythm and can follow that tune just fine. We create schedules that work, know what we want and move toward it, and achieve meaningful goals. Rock on! Those are good days.

Other times, though, it's not so clear what we want, where we're going, how we're going to get there, or if the bear will eat us before we can get there. Our foggy minds can't remember how things look in the sunshine, and the mud we're slogging through threatens to pull our boots right off. When we really need clarity, where can we find it? Especially when we need it right now, right here, for this situation.

At times like these, Processmind can bring us back to our path.

Besides these large-scale issues of self-guidance, we are often challenged by situations where we feel surprised, disrespected or hurt by someone's behavior and don't know how to respond in the moment. How can we respond with self-respect, power and authenticity when we're blindsided? How can we think and feel, on the fly, as we need to do at times

of intense reactivity? We need not only to remain conscious, but also able to be honest and skillful in our responses.

Relating to Oneself

Personally, I don't have a very hard time noticing when my partner, client or even a tennis opponent is in a bad state; I just wish I could observe my own issues as astutely. The innerwork of honest self-knowledge demands that we notice our own edges and take responsibility for them. Edges, meaning those places where we fear to tread, bring us up against our fears and limits. They reveal the next steps in our life's unfolding path, if we take them -- and also if we don't. Sometimes we move into the inner world of choice, as Wickes called it¹⁵, and at other times we continue unawares. William Blake expressed this confidence in the human spirit: "A fool who persists in his folly eventually becomes wise."¹⁶ We might; we can hope to.

Self-leadership in this vein is an inside job. As a therapist I notice marked differences in the self-inquiry capabilities of clients who meditate versus those who don't have an interior practice. "Burning our wood" refers to the efforts we make via therapy, meditation, journaling, or other intentional practices, to open ourselves to those behaviors and patterns of mind that don't serve us well. Burning our wood equals innerwork, that is, all those processes we undertake to remove whatever obscures the beauty of our true nature and that of the beings and world around us. When we clean and polish up the eyes of our souls we may awaken to more of dreamland and be more conscious of the essence level of reality. A personal practice of Processmind awareness has the potential to

¹⁵ Wickes, 1988.

¹⁶ Blake, William. The Marriage of Heaven and Hell

develop into a lovely, accessible means for opening to what the deep self knows, whether by turning inward or by tapping into the earth-channel.

Using a Processmind practice moves us into the “deepest part” of ourselves. What is this? How do we find it? Again, it’s best understood experientially.

Your Deepest Part

The Sufi tradition has thrived for centuries on heart-based practices. This adaptation of a Sufi exercise demonstrates the power of tapping into a particular “deepest part” of the self, the heart:

1. Take a moment to stop. Let everything go except being present to yourself. Use several breaths to release all tensions and concerns, sending them out on the breath.
2. Use a top-to-toe body scan to intentionally release tension from each part of the body: the scalp, forehead, face and neck; the shoulders, arms and hands; the upper, mid- and lower back; the chest and entire abdomen; the buttocks, thighs, calves and feet.
3. Continue to use a relaxing breath to move toward the soft belly state, with no tension remaining in the abdomen. This may take awhile to discover. You will know you are there if your body is so relaxed that you can notice a response in the abdomen to a movement as minor as winking.
4. In this quiet state, venture upward from the belly to the heart area. See if you can sense your heart itself, in its place in your body. Take a few moments to notice your its beating, its muscular pulsing rhythm in your chest.

5. See if you can feel the condition of your heart. Is it at ease, or is it tense? Contented or discontented? What emotions can you feel in your heart? You may be able to sense different emotional energies in different parts of the heart.

6. Now, go deeper still. Travel beyond the known emotions and concerns of the familiar heart level, into the heart of your heart. Remaining relaxed and open, sense into the essence level of your being, the sense of the deepest part. This is the encounter with being on its own terms, apart from concepts or agenda; emptiness, consciousness itself; this is what we are calling Processmind. This experience will typically disappear when you think about it; ah so! Once you have touched into the deepest reality, it will attract you to return.

7. Take your time moving out of this exercise. Reflect for several moments on what you have found in the chambers of your own heart, and in the deepest heart of the heart.

8. Simply asking “How is my heart today?” can become a precious portal into consciousness, bringing awareness of everyday issues along with essential and intimate information about your inner being at its most essential level.

This heart exercise demonstrates the power of going inward and asking about what Mindell calls “the deepest part of yourself.” In some Eastern traditions the *hara*, a spot located three finger-widths below and two finger-widths behind the navel, is considered to be the center of one’s energy and consciousness. In the Hindu tradition higher states of awareness are connected with the third eye and crown chakras. Mindell takes a more deeply democratic approach to the body’s awareness, inviting us to note whichever part feels deepest to us personally at a given moment.

The idea is to learn to access our inner reality of feelings, drives and issues as well as becoming ever more conscious of the essence that lies deeper still: suchness, as the Zen Buddhists say; beautiful true nature; or what Mindell calls processmind. As noted in the above exercise, once the mind begins to *think about* the encounter with basic beingness it has begun to slip into self-awareness at the CR (or consensus reality) level and out of touch with the pre-conceptual or essence level. We naturally tend to do this out of a sense of self-preservation, literally, the preservation of a sense of selfhood, versus simply letting-be and noticing our experience via any channels that are open in a more dream-like way. “Selfhood” makes a claim on separateness, or what is generally called ego. The fear that arises is the existential fear that “I” would cease to matter if I were to be continuously in touch with the sense of simply being a part of all that is and melting into this basic suchness. This altered state cannot persist throughout our everyday life; other awarenesses always open up before us, and we are doing well if we can move fluidly among the levels of CR, dreamland and essence.

The connection of Processmind with an earth spot supports a relationship with the essence level by providing a means for staying longer in condition of freedom from “small self-ness” as we surrender into the essence of the place. We can let go longer, slipping out of the “little u”¹⁷ and tapping into relatedness with all-that-is, which is the door that leads beyond our primary process and into what wants to come through in spite of our conscious awareness: the transpersonal Processmind, from which flow secondary processes rich with meaning and potential.

¹⁷ Mindell, 2007, p. 44.

The following practice involves the earth-based approach Mindell created, which touches into the same powerful essence of one's being, enhanced by tapping into one's fundamental connection to the earth.

PROCESSMIND EXERCISE

IN PAIRS, with one person guiding the other:

1. Quiet your body, loosen your mind. Relax the body deeply and sense into what is the deepest part of yourself.
2. Turn yourself around and feel in what direction you're pulled.
3. Notice what this direction means, as a direction on the compass or just as a magnetic pull. For instance, sometimes if you go south you go to Mt. Tabor, sometimes to Antarctica. Notice now what piece of land that is associated with for you.
4. Sink more fully into that place. Allow yourself to notice the experience there. Does it have personal significance? Historic? Are the land forms powerful? Feel into how this spot affects you personally.
5. Notice the atmosphere there. Slowly, become that spot. Feel yourself as that place, allowing yourself to move, if you wish, as that place. Notice any flirts or small aspects that capture your attention and help you to surrender into becoming that place. For now, you are that. Discover what it feels like, is like, to be this place on earth. Notice all that's there and sense into its essence.
6. It can be helpful to write or draw a bit about this – a few words, a gesture, to capture it in some way.

7. Now, *as* that part of the earth, what are your attributes of leadership? What do you know, see, hold within you? What can you do, endure, handle? How do you operate and lead when you are that spot?
8. In this place and as this earth-spot, find the responses to the question, Who am I naturally?
9. What are my interests, gifts and talents?
10. What is the hardest thing for me about taking leadership?
11. What does the Processmind have to say about that?
12. Take a few moments to make a note about your experience before switching roles.

Your Virtual Swiss Army Knife

Processmind can be like a Swiss Army knife for life. It's a handy tool for problem-solving in all kinds of circumstances. For instance, I was looking at what I'd written for this chapter and feeling discouraged that it sounded like a boring version of a self-help book. All inspiration seemed to have left me. I decided to walk the dogs instead of pushing myself to write without inspiration. As we sniffed our slow way down the street, I found myself again ruminating about the writer's block I was experiencing when I suddenly found myself facing a small tree on someone's lawn. "Use the earth to go inside," I remembered. Shamans traditionally enter the worlds of non-ordinary reality via holes in trees, animal burrows, and other natural openings.

With my writing problems still on my mind I began to look more carefully at the tree, a smallish Japanese maple, not yet leafed-out on this early February day, but displaying

amazing hospitality by hosting many clusters of lichen on its crusty bark. I could feel myself becoming tree-ish now, sensing the tree's willingness to offer a home for this interesting lichen, but also deeply awaiting the fuller unfolding of my own glorious being.

I wasn't able to stay long in this place thanks to my dogs, but on returning home I returned to this Processmind process, again becoming the little maple full of burgeoning potential. I felt a thrill as the sap began to run, feeling spring coming on; then I pushed my energy outward as the leaves actually emerged, until my body strained upward to offer my leaves to the sun, reaching heavenward, feeling invigorated with life. I stood full and wondrous, leafy, gorgeous --for now, until the other seasons come round again. As the tree, I hold the sure knowing of the seasons' turning, each with its own legitimacy.

My writer self was now better able to identify with the experience of fallowness, of being needed by those with whom I have lichen-like symbiotic relationships, and that I am not only a writer but also a dog owner, a parent, a partner, a therapist. In other words, I can't always do something creative just because I want to; the season has to be the right one for flowing and flowering.

Notice that in this case, I hadn't gone to one of my familiar special places. I just took what was in front of me and let it organically lead me toward what I needed. I didn't need to set aside a time and a place. When something was on my mind, the world itself offered itself to me with a meaningful response.

This is the everyday application of Processmind, free of method, simply yielding to the signal that resonates in the moment. If I had focused instead on the sniffing dogs I would have had a different experience, but this was the one that grabbed me. I hadn't asked for a

sign from the heavens; I only followed my own dreaming process. And voila! Instead of writer's block I have a few pages that help to fill out the concept!

Processmind Practice: An Outline

I hope that example speaks for itself. Briefly, what is needed is:

- awareness, simple noticing of where I am and what captures my attention
- releasing the personal mind and allowing the essence of the earth spot or being to reveal itself
- surrendering to “treeness” (in this example) by entering into the experience of tree, with its bark, the lichen, the gradual process of sap rising and leaves emerging, and finally its energetic habit of reaching sunward
- having felt into such an organic process, relating it to your own life.

Let's consider someone who is consumed with internal conflicts as she confronts the complications in a divorce process. This imagined person has a child she loves and is, additionally, involved in a committed relationship. Now she needs to contemplate her financial obligations to both her child and her new partner. On one side is a part of her that wants to be as generous as possible toward her daughter's well-being; yet on the other side, she feels the need to be responsible for her share of the costs in her current relationship, which will constrict her resources with regard to her daughter. She loves both parties, and she carries a strong sense of responsibility for both caring for her child and for carrying her fair share in an adult relationship. How can she balance the demands on both sides? What would that look like? And where can she turn to find the best responses?

If she can use a process that permits her to trust that the best responses will be those that arise from within, she will be able to relax and move forward with authenticity and freedom. An easy relationship with Processmind might help with her decisionmaking. The following is a practical exercise that can serve as a conscious support with the challenges we face every day.

A Processmind-Based Decision Making Practice

This practice takes Processmind practice into the details of our decisionmaking by noticing a specific detail in the scene, known as a “flirt.” A flirt may be any small or specific aspect of the scene that stands out for us. In process work we observe flirts as a way to help us notice which aspect in the scene holds unique energy for us right now, even though the earth spot we are visiting may be a familiar one.

1. Become present to yourself in a quiet state. Use several breaths to release all tensions and concerns, sending them out on the breath.
2. Use a body scan to release tension from each part of the body: the scalp, forehead, face and neck; the shoulders, arms and hands; the upper, mid- and lower back; the chest and entire abdomen; the buttocks, thighs, calves and feet.
3. Use a long, slow, relaxing breath to move toward the soft belly state, with no tension remaining in the abdomen.
4. Bring into your awareness the most pressing concern or question that’s on your mind right now. Remain in a relaxed state while letting both (or all) sides of the issue be present in your awareness.

5. Now allow your attention to go to a place on the earth that captures your attention. It may be a familiar spot, a beloved place, or any part or aspect of the world that magnetizes you right now. Drink it in. Become that place, with all its features, conditions and beings large and small.

6. Notice anything in that scene that “flirts” with you. A flirt is some small aspect of the place or organism that may capture your eye. Unfold that flirt by becoming it, letting your body float like the leaf or crawl like the bug, or move like whatever you’ve noticed. Awaken your awareness to its natural process, its suchness, and let it work in you. Take you time to go into it fully; then, gradually letting it unfold to a natural ending point. Listen attentively for a felt response in your own being.

7. Now, bring your current issue or question into your awareness, along with the Processmind spot and flirt. Let them interact, as if in a conversation or dance, going back and forth with their energies, engaging with each other, problem to Processmind, Processmind to problem. Take your time to notice any changes within you as you feel into this process. Stay with the process until you feel clear about how this experience can contribute to your peace of mind.

8. As you move gently out of this exercise, reflect on whatever wisdom the earth has revealed to you about the question or worry you’ve been carrying. Quietly settle into accepting its truth.

While the rational mind serves us by holding onto information and logical protocols, the decisions we make on the basis of logic and rationality alone often backfire because we’ve failed to bring our total consciousness to the issue. Using this

earth-based process opens us to a deeper consciousness, not necessarily familiar to our usual CR identity, but truly arising from our deepest essence, which is Processmind.

The choices we make on the basis of what arises from our deepest self carry the potential to bring greater ease, acceptance and joy into our total being. Laboring over decisions by considering what's most logical, efficient, cost-effective and rational can still leave us, and our communities, with an empty feeling. If we leave out our deeper knowing, we do so at our own peril. Processmind democratically uses the earth as a vehicle for getting out of our usual mindset and into something larger, more organic, and more wise, always present at the quantum level. Processmind awareness permits us to observe how that essence of being shows up in our lives as we encounter it personally, running through all of us, and everything.

PART II

Chapter 6

A Processmind-Based Workshop in Sustainable Leadership

**If powerful men and women
could remain centered in the Tao,
all things would be in harmony.
The world would become a paradise.
All people would be at peace,
and the law would be written in their hearts.**

Tao Te Ching, #32

I was enjoying such lively effects from bringing Processmind awareness into my life that I chose to experiment with offering it to non-process-workers in two formats: a series of five classes, and then a weekend workshop. I wanted to share with others the wealth it has offered me. The idea for presenting these offerings came from having enjoyed several experiences of practicing Processmind awareness on my own, as well as under the guidance of Arny Mindell, Lily Vassiliou and others.

In this chapter I will provide examples from both class and workshop settings. The reader can follow the Powerpoint outline of the workshop found in the Appendix: “Beautiful True Nature Leadership Workshop.” The work implements some of the premises outlines in the preceding chapters on putting Porcessmind to use in one’s life.

Overview

I titled both the class and the workshop “Beautiful True Nature: the Earth-Path of Sustainable Leadership.” In both I provided an introduction to Processmind as a method of self-growth, strength building, and especially, personal leadership based on internal knowing. Given that Processmind can be seen as the Tao or background of all that emerges, I believe that leaders are wise to learn to tap into its flow. Here in Portland, where we have so many environmentally-oriented organizations and industries, I felt an earth-based method of self-awareness might be a welcome tool for leaders. I was also curious to discover how well the concept of Processmind, and its practice, could be translated outside the process work community.

My intention was to teach the essentials of Processmind to non-process workers: its background in shamanism, its relationship to Jungian archetypes, and its similarity to other traditions from around the world. From there we would practice Processmind via exercises focused on self-awareness, decision-making, conflict situations and self-leadership. My hope was that participants would discover how PM could serve as a practical yet deep method for approaching everyday situations we all face.

Throughout, we considered the meaning of sustainability in leadership, including metaskills for communicating and leading by example, or, essentially, eldership. Where relevant I also introduced process work concepts regarding roles, rank, edges, polarities and primary and secondary processes.

Processmind Basics

I began leading the first class by sharing my feeling that “Beautiful True Nature” equals the natural condition of things, innately beautiful and true to itself. Further, this language

speaks to our being just fine and worthy of shining – while also referring to what we are calling Processmind, as the truest and most inevitably beautiful underlying reality. The “Earth-Path” aspect refers to using the earth to find one’s path, and to the naturalness we can find in simply following what feels deeply true for ourselves. Finally, by “Sustainable Leadership” I mean leadership that endures because it is caring, attuned and nurturing of self and others.

Then the class members shared their reasons for participating: two had come to learn to be better leaders in their chaotic organizations, one to cope with a job whose challenges are beyond her known readiness, a few to strengthen their resolve to bring out their dreams and another to support her movement toward clarity about her life work.

Leadership Questions and Our Inner Sides

We began with a lively discussion of some fundamental thoughts about ourselves as leaders:

- What are my personal challenges and issues regarding leadership?
- What skills and tools do I need in order to address these issues?
- What are the professional and personal goals that will take me to my next level?

We moved on to paired sharing about each person’s current concerns and issues regarding her leadership, with the intention of helping them to get in touch with their personal needs and strengths, as well as connecting the group and beginning to build a sense of community. This was lively and energetic. Since we had an uneven number of participants, I paired up with a young woman new to me and listened with some awe as she told of how she had risen to the demands of a job suddenly left to her when her boss

departed unexpectedly. Now, at 26, she was responsible for producing the annual fundraising event, with no previous experience, and while she seemed to be dealing with it very well, she said she doesn't feel she's actually up to it.

It happened that nearly all the participants in both settings were women, many of them with a good deal of self-awareness, eager to share with others about what leadership can look like today. Of course, there was some edge, or resistance, to sharing at such an initial stage of relating. In fact two people chose not to continue through the class series, saying they did not feel able to engage at such a personal level among strangers. In fact, I had encouraged one participant (someone well known to me) to amplify her tiny voice, and while she did a great job of doing so, I later learned it was too edgy for her much quieter partner, whom I had not met before, and who chose not to return. I can see that I was not fully attuned to the diversity of experience and readiness among the participants, and probably should have been slowing things down rather than taking the group into what turned out to be a challenging experience for some. With hindsight I can see this was a hotspot, but I wasn't expecting it to be, especially since this was early in the course and not specifically a group process. I later learned that she was more anxious about this than her smiling face suggested, and I should have taken more care when I asked if she would be willing to take her process further. I held a lot of structural and psychological rank in that setting, and I think she lost track of her own power to refuse due to the rank inequality. I wish I had seen what was happening to the entire group, but working alone, I'm sure I missed many things.

Polarities Exercise

When we continued from that participant's vocal experiment, I opened up the awareness that most of us are both for and against ourselves; that is, we're at least two-sided toward our own conscious intentions, partly positive, supportive and self-encouraging, while also partly discouraged or at what we call an "edge," in process work terms¹⁸. We thought together about this via the following exercise, which I first modeled for the group and discussed with them. This exercise is based on practices taught by Army and Amy Mindell in their teaching of process work around the world.

Considering yourself as a leader, think about the following questions:

1. What are your strongest leadership qualities? How do they show up? Where? How do you feel when you're in this mentality? Make a hand gesture that embodies or expresses this side.
2. Where are you not strong, or feel lacking, as a leader? Where do these weaknesses show up? How do you feel when you're in this mentality? Make a hand gesture that embodies or expresses this side.
3. Allow the two hands to interact on the subject of "Me, a leader." Let them go back and forth with their feelings and positions. Continue for a few minutes, or until you feel a sense of unity at the essence of your leader-self.
4. Debrief. What did you experience? What did you discover about polarization in this process?

A participant commented:

"This exercise was excellent and very surprising. Being pushed with it made me get past the awkwardness and discover a physical experience that I've thought of multiple times and used when dancing."

¹⁸ An edge represents the boundary of a person's readiness for revelation or exploration.

Living the Polarities

This led to an introduction to process work role theory, emphasizing that how individuals play out roles is a field-relevant reality, not a personal one. That is, while one may or may not be deeply involved at a personal level, whatever is expressed is part of what the field needs to experience as well.

While each role such as “boss”, “underling”, “patient”, “helper” seems to be located with a given individual or group, it is actually a “timespirit” that needs to be filled by many of us. A timespirit is a role that inhabits a person for a short time while it is needed in the group process. It dissolves once it has been integrated. In a process work understanding, each role is much greater than any one individual or group. And, each of us is bigger than any one role. In other words, people are not roles.¹⁹ At this point I also brought in the concept of deep democracy, meaning that all voices (including the various voices inside ourselves) are needed and are welcome, and that all hold a valuable contribution to the process unfolding within and around us.

We talked about the three levels of awareness, the one we usually think of, consensus reality; the one that leads us to have unusual ideas, images or dreams, which we call dreamland; and a deeper essence level, where the mysteries of who we truly are and what is deeply unfolding reside. Discussion was lively and engaged as these differences were being considered.

After exploring that we often talk about third parties in our lives, to bring in what we may be personally reluctant to see or admit to in ourselves, the timing seemed right to explore roles not theoretically but actively through a group process

between the “sides” the group had found within themselves. After a very heated discussion of the different types of leadership we could see in women on the national scene, notably vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin and presidential candidate Hillary Clinton, I invited the women to take either side of a conversation on women as leaders. When no one actually took the “lead” (not surprisingly, as it was the first class), I stepped forward in the voice of Sarah Palin: “I’ve done amazing things with my life! It’s no small thing to raise a family and lead a state, and I’m doing it without the benefit of an Ivy League education.” A few women stepped in to take up a quieter voice, speaking for their fears of standing out, while someone stepped up and took over the Sarah Palin-like attitude.

Another voice came in, however, authentically wondering how we could have let Sarah into our conversation, or the nation’s. Evidently, Sarah Palin had become a ghost role, as she was spoken about but not present. However, I didn’t recognize this or do justice to it; I became confused between Sarah the role and Sarah the person in CR, with the feelings people were attaching to her (and disowning in themselves), so we continued to talk about her rather than about this part of ourselves. Still, a lively debate ensued, with some side-switching noted, and we closed with greater appreciation for our inner dualities and the wholeness that arises from their complementarity.

In the following class I realized that it was not clear to everyone why we had taken up this group process. I decided to withhold it from the workshop version, since it requires its own form of training and acclimatization, which was beyond the domain of this course.

¹⁹ <http://www.aamindell.net/worldwork-terms.htm>

Big and Little U/ Deep Democracy

I put a little u, a Big U, and Processmind on the board as I discussed them, and found myself drawing a wavy line that connected them all – process itself, in which we are at the same time Big, little and the All that Processmind contains. This felt very clear and powerful to me, and seemed to make things clearer to the class members as well. Processmind in its totality includes all parts of ourselves and everything, and all occurring at once. This visual helped me to see again how we can utilize a Processmind practice to help bring ease to questions and anxieties about life’s choices and meaning-making; since everything is intertwined, there’s no need to apologize for our bringing all of ourselves, feelings, thoughts, dreams, sentient awareness and deepest being, to whatever is arising: we can’t help but to do so. If we can also be aware, that adds a dimension of wonder and truth to the experience.

We discussed the differences between being real and including all of ourselves, versus marginalizing some parts and exposing only those parts we want to show. What do we gain and lose in those differing approaches? We began to open up the ways in which we can actually oppress ourselves by denying or discrediting less-popular aspects of our being. The leadership question that emerged was, what would happen if we meet energy with energy, rather than shrinking in the face of strong voices or personalities, or rather than shrinking from our internalized voices about being attractive and “lady-like”?

Consciousness and Entelechy

Having established an awareness of the difference between authentic engagement and a less true way of living, the questioning went much deeper: *what is conscious of our Big and little u's?* What is observing? What is behind all this? Is it Tao, God, intelligence, or simply non-intelligent evolution? Mindell's perspective is that it is a consciousness that is path-like, a path that is your own and not your own, and that pulls you into its orbit even when you think you are leaving it.²⁰ His thought is that it's not a matter of faith but of experience: we follow our own path; we respond to our own pulls; and in addition, the sense of magnetism by the earth is a channel for that path to reveal itself.

I framed my understanding that the Processmind concept involves a synergistic combination of these factors:

- the field theory of quantum physics²¹;
- a mentality of deep democracy (i.e., openness to all forms of life and communication, and all levels of being[consensus reality, dreaming, and essence]);
- a shamanistic ability to relate to the earth in a personal way;
- a Jungian perspective on archetypes; and
- spiritual, or essence-level, awareness

In other words, as noted earlier, Processmind seems to refer to a Mind or consciousness that is process-like and/or a process that is mind-like. Each of the above theoretical approaches captures some of this reality, and Processmind is a conceptualization that picks up significant aspects of each, building a fresh and fuller picture than any single one of these approaches does, by itself.

²⁰ Mindell 2007, p. 402.

²¹ Mindell, 2000, p. 80.

Processmind refers to that which knows what is going on, knows that we have stories, and knows that we also know that we have stories. It approximates what Jung called it the “Self with a capital S,” as well as the underlying sense that there is something that is unfolding here, there is an intelligence, Tao, in which we fundamentally and intrinsically participate. It’s that part of ourselves which is of the whole; where our guidance arises from, no matter how we are identifying. This led into a discussion of entelechy, the personal genetic coding that tells us (or an acorn, or any living thing) to grow into itself. “Like a life drive?” one student suggested. Another referred to a story wherein a scorpion stings a frog it has offered to help, with the rationale that it couldn’t help itself – it’s a scorpion, after all. I related it to astrology as well, saying that to the extent that may have any legitimacy, it’s the same sort of concept of innateness coupled with a connection to that which is greater. In other words, your entelechy, your nature is inextricably connected to the totality of the Tao that cannot be spoken. As a group we were at a linguistic edge, with a deepening sense of understanding alongside the mystery of what it is we’re trying to conceptualize. Entelechy, I said, “is you unfolding into you,” the intelligent process of one’s life.

In the vein of deep democracy, the group acknowledged that none of us there, curious and seeking to further unfold ourselves (or be unfolded), could settle for sitting at home and watching daytime TV. Yet for someone that might be correct, sufficient, and on her path; we can’t know. I wondered aloud if that person is born to do that or might be unconsciously marginalizing more of themselves, but that I don’t know – maybe some people are born to do that. This brought laughter, suggesting a group edge of some sort – perhaps to admitting our own TV-watching. In a sense, we imagine, it doesn’t matter what

we do, as long as we're generally on our path. I spoke of the enlightened Papaji, who loved TV, and others who were alcoholics but also great teachers. A class member then mentioned a monk who had a lot of sex as a means of enlightenment.

One student wondered whether we would be more likely to become more enlightened, the more we're aware of and attuned to our entelechy. We imagine together that this may be, and it may not; and I submit that there's a great sufficiency in just feeling what you're feeling and doing what you're feeling led to do. It's a great freedom from the "story" and the constraints of the life story.

In our efforts to grasp the connection between one's personal unfolding and what actually occurs historically, John McCain became a ghost role. Some in the group, trying to make this conversation practical, said that if he isn't elected, he can complain that he should have been, since he thought he should try – or, on the other hand, he could say, from his 100-year-old self, "I guess I wasn't supposed to win – since I didn't." I suggested that it illustrates how we tend to try to stay on our path, our trajectory, and still have to course-correct all the time. I demonstrated on the board the physics of how light rays converge generally, displaying the least-action theory that we also follow in our lives.

When I casually noted that this is the essence of the course and the reason I titled it "Beautiful True Nature," I added that I intend to rename it for the workshop being offered to the general public. Someone said that was what had drawn her here, then added, "That's me – a freak among freaks." Someone else tried to tamp this down, saying she's not a freak, maybe because this represents an edge where this person would have to claim her own "freakiness." Since I saw it as a claim for an aspect of her identity that she was

comfortable with, I failed to pick it up as an example of self-marginalization. What I did say was “that’s just your beautiful true nature, C.”

Taking up a leadership/rank role, C. then asked me what little u in me is reluctant to use such a powerful name, an excellent question to which I responded in very CR language, discussing my belief in using consensus reality language as a way of being more subversive thus marginalizing the very power that I have identified and related to in moving toward and being pulled to this particular work. Others agreed that it is a wonderful phrase. Evidently I was edged out by this appreciation for the very words I’ve chosen to capture my intention behind my work. I finally expressed thanks, but only after being overwhelmed by their fervor. In a few moments I was able to acknowledge out loud how much I love that name.

Experiencing Processmind

We discussed that there are many ways of coming into greater groundedness with ourselves. The Buddha went through years of inquiry to attain awakening. At the moment of enlightenment Mara, the tempter, challenges him, “By what authority do you resist me?” and Buddha simply touches the ground. “By *this*, the earth, the nature of things, the sustainable way things go,” Buddha seemed to be saying without words. And this is the basis for our shared adventure into the earth as a vehicle for deepening and grounding.

Beginning to talk about the unknown elements we may need and may find in unexpected places, we considered the encounter between ocean and rock, the endless endurance of the rock that absorbs the flow of the waters, yielding just a bit of itself as it surrenders into its physical setting and its reality. From there I went on to model how we can access

Processmind and find advice for both our Big U and little u self. Finally, I guided the class into the exercise according to the method (see Appendix), at the end bringing in a question about guidance for their leadership. Afterward we discussed their experiences, the earth spots they went to, and their impact.

A young participant said she went to a scary place. First, she felt herself at Hood River, but then moved onward to Hanford Nuclear Reservation. She reported: “I have been aware of being a baby, so at Hanford it was scary; I felt I needed to conquer it...but at the same time there’s such beauty there, birds chirping, the deer and the fish, the breeze, nature there. It’s me, and at the same time there’s this huge, never-ending source of danger and pain. When you said ‘ask a question about leadership’ I said ‘I can face the fear and help others face their fears. And be fully there.’ If I’m like that, I can be able to face the issue there...It was absolutely emotional for me there.”

Another reacted: “I was seeing myself above the world, then going into the water and falling in the water, then swimming - but I would stop, like I would forget. It was weird. The surroundings looking at me knew that I was different.” I comment that she dropped like a human, then swam like a fish. She says she felt her head began to change shape like a fish, shapeshifting into fish nature. She continues, “I wasn’t doing what I knew I needed to be doing. I was just there, letting go, wasn’t trying, yes, I was putting some energy in, but not trying – well, yes, I was trying, but not aware I was falling.”

Regarding the role of Processmind, M.S. shared that, “I felt a strong sense of discovery, hope, release, relief, and inspiration. The process of venturing into the unconscious/dreamland while awake is very unusual but very beneficial to me. I have so much going on in the underlayers, and upperlayers, and I often dismiss myself and [my]

qualities in how to deal with it all. The experience of learning and exercising process mind made me feel closer to my quest and given path in life. I had a strong sense of intuition, which is not common, and so enlightening. Using the mind to travel beyond the immediate space uses a special part of the mind that involves imagination, faith, adventure, etc. This seems to be very particular to the exercise and experience. It is an escape while delving into the most important part of being. The incorporation of nature into the self and creating an identity through it is so refreshing and reigniting. It's all a bit scary and unknown, but safe and reassuring.”

Sustainable Leadership

Moving into the overarching workshop topic of leadership, we began to examine what sustainable leadership looks like. Some had thoughts about bosses who aren't sustainable, describing them as blind, incompetent, not present, and unaware. They're losing you, and losing business – and that's not going to be sustainable. They're going to get canned or you're going to wander away and the organization may suffer entropy. The group had a good sense of what didn't lead them, which began to set the bar for our work together.

It wasn't long before people began to discover they had some good ideas about what sustainable leadership does involve. They observed that effective, sustainable leaders:

- don't show people up but empower others
- step into their own power primarily for the sake of system
- are all about connecting
- sense that every person can be a leader
- are not hierarchical in spirit

- do not leave a footprint, in the sense that they are not egoistic
- share everything they know, like tribal elders
- understand that every little thing can be a teaching important for survival
- can guide a shift from accumulation to sharing
- keep the earth first in their planning and see nature as mentor, model and measure
- have a strength within that sustains the drive to lead
- know there's more going on than can be measured -- not just consensus reality or

any one level

- are self-nurturing
- are deeply democratic and know that everything matters
- come from the heart, or even the heart-mind; and are those who integrate both

What a long and righteous list we had created! I noticed that at times during the discussion it sounded like a good leader is always in a leadership role, and I disagreed with this notion, saying some just live, chopping wood, carrying water, and yet are ready to show up, like shamans.

Someone noted the importance of being able to rely on this person's training, his interdependence with other generations of leaders in the field. Another noted that trusting a leader is a critical factor for those following behind. M.S. said, "I really liked this part because it helped to clarify the everyday issues that surround us. Leadership comes up against so many challenges and it's good to have an understanding of what category or type the challenge falls into so that techniques for dealing with them are more easily engaged." And from J.B., who manages a chaotic and challenging healthcare center: "I

found the lesson/meditation in going to a direction and place helpful, and was able to use it specifically on a frazzled work day to find some peace.”

Having opened our consciousness of what could be hoped for, and what we are aiming to grow toward, we became more active through exercises.

Techniques for Supporting Your Leadership

After reviewing the basic Processmind practice, this Part focused on applying it toward self-guidance, as well as using a method I called Processmind-Archetypal Self-Guidance, which goes further into what I see as the archetypal aspect of PM practice.

After beginning with Processmind practice, I invited the group to stay with the Processmind awareness state and ask questions about their natural leadership style:

- Who am I naturally?
- What are my interests, gifts and talents?
- What’s the hardest thing about leadership for me?
- What does the Processmind have to say about that from the earth spot you’re related to now?

With this I opened up the role that archetypes have played in human history and then compared it to the role some spots have played for people of all times: places laden with historical significance, terror, awe, sacredness and personal meaning. Places, in other words, which can carry archetypal significance for some. Uluru (or Ayers Rock), for instance, as the meeting place for many Aboriginal songlines, carries a weight of meaning, as does the sacred Ganges River for Indians, or the sites of critical national battles for others, or the place a couple met and fell in love, or an earth-spot one has encountered in a

Processmind journey. After considering the power that an earth-form, a river, a mosque or a tree can convey, one person shared the Processmind spot she had gone to and we discussed the personal question she had brought in, which was about her intention of establishing herself professionally.

She modeled entering her experience on a Processmind chart below as a means of tracking each day's experiences. She and I then shared it with the group to use as a tool for reminding ourselves of our sacred earth travels. We filled in the chart for today's PM experience. Here's a sample of its headings:²²

PROCESSMIND SPOT	CHARACTERISTIC/S NOTICED	QUESTION/ PROBLEM CONSIDERED	RESPONSE NOTED

The chart was well received; by now the participants were enthusiastically practicing PM awareness in their lives, and this tool can help solidify that practice.

Process Work Tools

The class began with excitement about our new presidential choice, Barack Obama, and everyone full of amazement and joy. Tales were told of staying up to watch and soak up every possible bit of news, of wanting to be at the inaugural celebration, and so on. C.R. reported that she had heard that Europeans are impatient with the 2-month wait for a new

president, as the world's financial problems need new wisdom and leadership immediately.

I had hoped to do some class-related analysis of Obama's leadership attributes, but realizing the limits of our time and the likelihood that some would be late, I determined not to try this tonight. Moving forward with our agenda was my own version of a "Yes, We Can" moment. In truth, it was great to have everyone together again for the first time since the very first class. Those who had been regulars were quite well bonded, but the one who had been sick and traveling needed more glue. She was eager and involved, but the ties hadn't had a chance to develop.

After an initial Processmind practice I challenged the group to again look at their own leadership qualities, which we talk about later. Now we put our innerwork to work in terms of earth-based leadership and communication. We began to discuss that there's more going on in any interaction than many may recognize, including aspects of rank awareness. We used the example of a father-in-law who asks his son-in-law in a friendly manner about his job status, apparently innocently, while the younger man feels a lot of pressure. The older man is a successful lawyer, with much social rank; he's the father of the younger man's wife, giving him structural rank in the family; and he has the ease about him of someone with psychological rank – but he is also ignorant of the great rank difference between them, and the implications to the younger man of his inquiry about his job situation. We considered how the younger man may or may not feel spiritual rank here, if he were able to hold his head up and own his worth despite his job struggles. In that case he might hold more eldership than his father-in-law, since the older man didn't have awareness of his rank or use it to help the younger feel seen and supported.

²² See Processmind Chart in Appendix

After some continued discussion of rank, we looked at how we play out roles in our lives, and the difference between one's conscious identity and her role. Roles are bigger than any individual, and may switch around. A role may be personal, but often we are "dreamed up" to fill a role the group needs. So one who feels innocent may be seen as malicious, if the group needs a target; or one who is malevolent, such as a sadistic ruler, may be seen as a hero if the country needs that time-spirit to be filled.

Meanwhile, ghosts roles were in the field and were named but not present (the government, the enemy, the boss.) They come in through gossip, news reports, and often as scapegoats for the group. The ghost role caught on well, as everyone could see how they use that strategy. Having learned about ghost roles, participants later began reporting the ghosts they noticed in their lives during the week. C.R. stated that her life and career coach had been supporting her in noticing the "stories" she tells herself, such as "my mother wasn't available" or "I'm not good at reaching out to people." She connected this sense of "story" with our conversation about ghosts in the first class. I supported the connection to a point while also noticing the difference: while many stories have ghosts behind them, it's not conversely true that all ghost figures come out of personal stories. Others are more cultural, such as figures representing the law, or imagined powers and influences.

Next we discussed primary/secondary theory. Again, the group found it very pertinent, as everyone could relate to the internal conflicts we're always facing as people who have our own drives (conscious and unconscious), and who also care about our relationships and responsibilities and the impression we're making.

To model a typical primary-secondary process using the hands as the two sides, I pick up my sleep challenges. The left hand picks at the right, which wants to just be flat and sleep. “I can so sleep! Leave me alone!” They engage; the right resists; they flow back and forth, till they end by becoming embedded in one another, relaxing, embracing each other and releasing – toward sleep. The group seems to appreciate the sidedness involved here, and how the two sides tangle and, as we have observed, are entangled. Now it’s their turn to experience an inner conflict via the same exercise.

Conflict Work: Taking Sides in Your Hands

1. Working with a partner, decide who will go first (Person A.) Person B will serve as a coach for Person A during the first round. Person A, please get in touch with your Processmind awareness from the beginning of the class.
2. Person A: Describe the disturber that is creating upset or conflict at work or in your life. Share the story of your conflictual situation.
3. Remember, the problem contains the solution – which means, there’s something in this for you, something that is awaiting your discovery and engagement in order to bring you growth, balance, or a solution to your problem.
4. What part of you is most disturbed by it (i.e., what is the part of you that doesn’t like or identify with this disturber, that thinks it’s wrong?) This is your primary or everyday self. Let one hand show the disturber energy; unfold its movement, its character. Person B, encourage and support the process.
5. Then, let the other hand show the primary self’s energy, that is, your everyday consciousness. Again, unfold its posture, its movement, its basic stance and energy.

6. Let them engage, move together, struggle, dance or whatever arises naturally. Let the process continue unfolding for a few moments.

7. Now, bring the Processmind mentality into the process your hands are involved in. Let it evolve until there is a natural temporary resolution. Partner B, encourage and guide this process.

8. Discuss what happened. Notice changes and any temporary resolution that may have occurred. Make a few notes or a drawing to capture your awareness before switching roles.

The class members did this with energy, delight and effectiveness, realizing the transformative effect. They were startled, relieved of their narratives, in a way. One said: “I see this exercise as different from the journeying – seems in the journey work, I am getting information from the universe/earth/my insides, in the hands exercise, only **from my insides**. Interesting.” Another reported, “This was an interesting exercise. I have to admit that I was skeptical when we first started, I didn't believe this would lead me anywhere. After I jumped into it and stopped thinking so much it was incredibly insightful. There is a lot to be said for physically acting out what is happening inside. I need to do it a bit more to really tap into that place and reveal the inner conflict. “ (N.A.)

From this we went on to apply the primary/secondary concept to a workplace conflict. Having seen how the theory worked here, we moved on to see how Processmind can be a tool for sustainable living and leadership. How can we tap into PM for guidance? How can we let ourselves trust into it when in a conflict situation? More specifically, how can it serve to help us communicate more of our truth, or move through a decision-making

process? Can it be helpful in confrontations, when we might need to tap into our best reserves in a heated situation?

The power of metaskills became relevant as we discussed some of the typical conflicts people are facing. Unfortunately, my technical difficulties with filming prevent relating specifics, but I chiefly modeled differences in delivering unpopular messages with care and awareness of the feelings of all parties, versus just as information. It's interesting that while I can actually be good with this in my professional life, I can also miss signals and gloss over feelings of family members – or my own.

Time seemed to fly in this class situation; it was so nice to be with this lively group. I sometimes became so comfortable that I found myself watching some of the exchanges without stepping in as a responsible facilitator, as I was enjoying the dynamic of their exchanges. Sitting rather than standing put me at ease, perhaps too much. Yet I was at home, and the group was exchanging actively and with benefit. When I noticed this edge to my own leadership, I began to “go over my own edge,” as we say, or challenge myself, by standing to teach more of the time, for which some later expressed appreciation.

Conflict

Our next gathering focused on how we can handle conflict in the workplace. After reviewing the three levels of awareness, rank, roles, and primary/secondary awareness, we looked at how we might deal with conflict in the workplace and in other relationships.

The following exercise is a process that can be used in pairs or solo as a means of working on the differences and feelings that we may carry around, and which may be getting in the way of our freedom and joy. In process work, we try to notice when we are

speaking from our own side and when we are on the other person's side. If the issue is between oneself and a critical voice, we might at some point hear ourselves saying we understand that it's not easy to be the one offering feedback or criticism, and this sympathetic observation brings us to the critic's side of the table, at least for the moment. We might stay there and go into it more fully, or we might jump right back to our own side to defend ourselves. Switching places physically can be a helpful way of "finding the other in ourselves" and recognizing that we hold all the roles in ourselves, at some level.

It is also important that we maintain a high awareness of our own and the other person's feelings during this process, if we truly want to see change happen. When working out a difference with any person in our lives, it's very important that we take our own side strongly, in order to stand for our self. It's also very important to feel into the other's position, as we do when we switch sides during this innerwork exercise, to ensure that we understand and can offer empathy and concern for that person's deep and real feelings.

As resolution comes about for me, I might feel my concern is satisfied, but something painful may have been aroused in the other person; it is part of my responsibility to continue in the process until both parties arrive at a resolution based on mutual understanding.

An Exercise in Personal Conflict Facilitation

In pairs, select who will go first (Person A) and who will be the helper (Person B.):

1. Person A: Describe the disturber creating upset or conflict in your workplace or in your life. Share the story with your partner.

2. What part of you is most disturbed by the situation (i.e., what is the part of you that doesn't like or identify with this disturber, that thinks it's wrong?) This is your primary or everyday self. Partner, deepen this by inquiring for a bit more information about why it's so upsetting.

3. Open yourselves to the possibility that the problem contains the solution – which means, there's something in this for you, something that is awaiting your discovery and engagement in order to bring you greater awareness, growth or a solution to your problem.

4. Now, Person A, let one hand show the disturber energy, shaping and moving the hand to portray the feeling and behavior you see in the disturber. For example, this might be a critical supervisor.

5. Then, let the other hand show the primary self's energy, that is, the one who is disturbed. This might involve shaping and moving the hand. For example, this might be how you feel when you are criticized at work.

6. Now, let them engage by moving or talking together with emotions and movements. This might look like a struggle, a dance, or whatever arises naturally. Let it continue unfolding for a few moments. Partner, observe and support the process, noticing when either hand changes sides and is taking the other side by empathizing, speaking for the other, etc. If the struggle continues without shifting, help the two sides bring out their energies and feelings more fully.

7. Then, bring in the Processmind mentality (from earlier in the class) and see how it affects the situation. Let the engagement continue until you notice a natural temporary resolution. If done as partners, partner, encourage and guide this process, and watch for a moment of resolution, mutual understanding, or ease of the conflict.

8. Person B, speak to both sides (hands), sharing what you have observed about the struggle and the shifts you've noted.

9. Discuss together what Person A experienced and how s/he is feeling now. Thank one another for your work together.

One participant said after this exercise, "I feel somehow more compassionate, more interested/reminded of coming to a compromise. I suppose I feel less antagonistic... more willing to be vulnerable. Like I have more 'access to' my vulnerability?" And another spoke about how she had (or hadn't) utilized the practice during the week: "Only upon reflection have I realized that I should have gone into my process mind before reacting. I need to better develop skills to automatically look to it **before** I react and continue on in the initial and certainly tainted mindset." Another participant, N.A., had this to say about Processmind at work: "When the workshop started I was really struggling with the management staff at my job because of the lack of support while planning this large event that I had never done before. The processmind work helped me realize a few of the things I was really struggling with and ultimately let some things go. It didn't change the way my boss was handling the situation, however, it gave me some much needed confidence to carry this event out and let go of what was out of my control. That alone was invaluable."

Leadership, Eldership, and the Earth

For the final Part, I used photos of earth-archetypes, including huge golem-like creatures, as well as more intimate scenes taken in forests and fields and the Moro people of the Philippines in their totally earthen celebratory costumes. We discussed the challenge we felt in these images, to see and feel an identification and non-separation of our earth

environment and our self, and to experience this not only as an environmental theory. We need to also know it as a background reality, one to which we may give too little credence, but which reveals its depth of truth and richness as a resource for living, over and over again. We talked about the fact that this is often offered as an approach to environmentalism, and about the difference between any such “ism” and sustainability, which simply refers to the potential for life to continue on this planet. Probably sustainability is an anthropomorphic idea, since it is usually human life we are thinking about when we discuss sustainability; even in the worst of environmental catastrophes, some forms of life will be likely endure.

This class considered the sort of sustainable leadership needed for sustainable relationships and workplaces, as well as what a sustainable earth herself requires. In each case, we need to be in touch with ourselves, able to take our own side, aware that there are many other roles involved, aware of the impact of rank in its many guises, prepared to be present to the heated moments that arise, and able to stand among the leaders who can support needed shifts of consciousness, starting with ourselves. The likelihood of being more often in a position of participant leadership (rather than structural leadership) encouraged participants to learn to use opportunities to step up and speak truth to power – hopefully with metaskills.

I referred to the Gaia hypothesis, and took it further into the spiritual or energetic level where Processmind shows up, considering that we are we are inextricably linked to the earth, and we are inevitably returning to the earth, but also that we can become aware that the earth is always there for us and with us, to inform and inspire and guide. The earth’s behavior comes and goes in ways that look like chaos or complexity theory, like American

politics and like hurricanes, with changes arising cyclically. If we train ourselves to cultivate a Processmind consciousness, we can step up and say or do whatever is needed to preserve sustainability in the situations in our lives that call for an attuned awareness, a conscious approach to conflicts, and a voice for the marginalized or disenfranchised aspects of any scene, whether the issue is earth-based, work-oriented or personal.

Finally, we discussed how eldership differs from leadership. Eldership was a new concept for the group. We opened up its meaning to find eldership involves authenticity and groundedness in living one's own earth-path in congruence. The elder would be someone who taps into her Processmind for guidance, but who also essentially knows herself and her values and speaks from them routinely, with strength, gentleness, and sensitivity.

The elder is also she who feels deep democracy in every situation and hears the unspoken voice, feels the unspoken pain, senses the unannounced marginalization. She carries the world as her child, not as a burden but as a love, with the sensibility of responsibility, care and commitment that a good parent feels toward his child. And with all of that, the elder knows that life proceeds as a mystery, with an "elder elder" behind it all which we have been calling Processmind during this study, the background reality to which we may give too little credence, but which reveals its depth of truth and richness as a resource for living over and over again.

The workshop concluded with all of us practicing Processmind awareness with less guidance from me, so that everyone could deepen their own empowerment to take it up as a tool for daily living.

Observations

Needless to say, there are many things I would do differently, or omit, in a future workshop of this sort. For instance, I recognized the absolute importance of doing Processmind practice “right” the first time only after finding late in the day that two of the participants had gone to the nearby park and done something of their own creation. While I had gone out to observe and did inquire how it was going, I chose not to intrude on the silent inner traveling one was involved in and accepted the assurance of the other that they were fine and on task. Since I hadn’t ensured that the initial experience was on target with the intention and practice of Processmind as I had modeled and taught it, I doubt that they were able to use it well in the further exercises. This was the most serious omission, I think.

In the initial class I didn’t have all the handouts prepared in advance, which was of benefit when I did provide them for the workshop, the second presentation. I need to remember that people need to see new information and ideas laid out visually, not only on a white board or screen. Those who will make the effort to review between classes need to have clear information from the presenter, not only from their own note-taking. As one woman told me, “I would have liked at least a one page literature on the history/theories behind shamanism and archetypes. Also, maybe a list of the practices that goes with them.”

When I asked, “As you look back, did your behavior during the group process reflect your Processmind in ways you weren’t aware of? For instance, was there an attitude you connected to in your Processmind that you enacted, even if unaware at the time?” one of the two respondents said, “A little bit. Sense of quietness and staying how I was in the forest.”

On the other hand, one who did use PM as a practice said, “This is just great work! It’s like Buddhism, shamanism, reiki, earth based spirituality all rolled into one much more accessible practice! It’s not like I have to study for years, or pay a bunch of money to become ‘certified’ at one level or another, or take my refuge vows – it’s just so elegant in its simplicity and accessibility!! Now I am curious how this might tie into death and dying, addiction...?”

Another final comment: “I couldn’t get my thoughts together when it was time for evaluation, but I want to tell you how much I appreciated your class this last weekend. I am prone to depression; and cynacism [sic] -- that was met with your generosity at letting me join the class late as well as your accomidation [sic] of my disabilities. It gives me hope to realize that my understanding is far too small, that though the job is indeed impossible for me alone, I join a force of others now fervently working for peace and reconciliation on this troubled planet. Thank you for showing me this, and allowing me to be part of your teaching.”

Since I had begun with the premise that Processmind deserves to find its place among the honored practices humans use for deepening into the essence level of being, one comment warmed my heart because it reflected this intention so well:

Thank you for inviting me to participate in your process of moving this class into the light of day!

PART III

Chapter 7

Worldwork is Earthwork

**O beloved, look around!
You are not
some local appearance.**

**You are the bright blue sky,
the winde dark waters,
a vast ocean!**

**The drowning place
of a thousand little i's.**

Rumi

This chapter takes on earth-based applications of Processmind practice within the context of concerns for environmental sustainability, as related to personal integrity. There are many potential connection between the personal uses of Processmind awareness and their application on behalf of the Earth, the beloved planet we share.

I love the fact that Processmind incorporates elements of earth-based magnetism together with one's own processmind dreaming, combined with memories and projections about a place on the earth. There's a genius in permitting external and often unconscious associations, sometimes very personal, other times quite popular and sometimes even off-the-map, to be one's source of guidance. It's time to connect this natural awareness we have been acquiring with the crisis the earth is in right now, as the wellbeing of society and the natural environment clamor for a swift transition to social and ecological sustainability. No single challenge such as climate change, pollution, destruction of

forests, famine or terrorism can be regarded as "biggest," and no single aspect can be addressed in isolation from the others. The great challenge is that of making firmly based decisions emanating from an understanding of the interrelationships among all things. Process work's ability to hold all the roles in the frame and the deep democracy mind that says all those voices are important can help to fill in the picture effectively. The question is: How can we bring these process work tools into the conversation?

Currently the state of Oregon is widely considered to be a leader in sustainability, with the U.S. home base for The Natural Step located in Portland. The Natural Step is actually a set of four steps developed by Karl-Henrik Robert²³ in the 1990s and designed to guide corporate decisionmaking. These conditions, that must be met in order to have a sustainable society, are as follows:

The Four System Conditions

- 1 Nature cannot withstand a systematic buildup of dispersed matter mined from the Earth's crust (e.g., minerals, oil, etc.)
- 2 Nature cannot withstand a systematic buildup of persistent compounds made by humans (e.g., PCBs and DDT)
- 3 Nature cannot take a systematic deterioration of its capacity for renewal (e.g., harvesting fish faster than they can replenish, converting fertile land to desert)

²³ Robert, 2002.

4 Therefore, if we want life to continue, we must (a) be efficient in our use of resources and (b) promote justice.



The Natural Step articulates a **general rule**, which states that "human activities must not cause deviations from the natural balances that are large in comparison to natural fluctuations. In particular, any deviations should not be allowed to increase systematically."

Robert's work has begun to pervade the culture as a reasonable, indeed, an irrefutable method for approaching business decisions with the earth in mind. At last, a set of norms to refer to! The uptake is encouraging, with national organizations around the world taking the steps as guidelines.

Yet even while striking the shamanic note of trying to re-establish balance on the earth, these dry statements still cry out for a human voice. The boardrooms of the organizations being guided by TNS principles would benefit from listening to the voices of the species, the elemental forces, and the systemic conditions that will be affected by their decision-making. I dream of board members bringing in the voices of endangered species, acid rain clouds, displaced villages, and even the ghost roles of those already lost to extinction -- animal, vegetable and human -- due to the forces at work serving human consumption.

Amy Mindell seems to equate eldership with the ability to tune in to one's processmind when she states this is the voice of "the elder inside of each of us who is familiar with the various parts inside of herself or himself and also knows or intuitively the diversity of viewpoints and roles in the groups and communities that she or he encounters. This shamanic role can offer the relieving sense of 'having been there before' and can help to create a home for all. In so doing, this elder models the world that she or he is hoping to create. We call this deep part of ourselves our 'process minds.'"²⁴

An Edge to Sustainability

"Yum! Sustainability tastes sooo good, and with fewer calories, too!" Having our cake and eating it has become an American norm over the last few decades, and we've done a great job of exporting it around the world. Do we need to create a market for loving Gaia, the planet Earth, the mother of us all? Perhaps a giant Mother Earth's Day event in her honor? I'm sure the greeting card companies would be all over that, contradicting the message of sustainability by printing millions of Earth-loving cards.

In other words, "double signals," or confusing messages, abound in the arena of sustainability and green living. In our home, for instance, we want to recycle the plastic containers and bags the local recyclers can't handle – but this entails a long drive to the special depot that will take them. Since we don't haul bags and containers to the store for our bulk rice, etc., we wind up with plastic bags; these get recycled for doggie duty, then go into the trash. One way or the other, we involve more carbons in our lives than we intend, so when I speak as an earth advocate, it's something of a double signal that suggests I have an edge to going all the way with Natural Step number two, above, in

²⁴ Amy Mindell. *Psychotherapy and Politics International*, vol. 6 No. 3, pp 212-225.

reducing my own carbon residue.

Many of us would like the world to change, but we don't want to endure the trouble of helping make that happen. It's easier to dream of leaders who give charismatic speeches about community, or civil rights, or increases in military and police protection, improvements in the economy and the betterment of humankind,²⁵ than to give up buying take-out food in plastic containers.

Sustainable Leadership

As a non-scientist, I don't expect to lead the charge toward major changes in the way we manage resources. As an earthling, however, I am committed to improving my own and others' understanding of the situation confronting us. The sustainability I care most about is sustainability at the level of personal leadership, which means self-efficacy and advocacy for what matters in one's own heart.

What turns each of us on, matters. What we dream of, matters. Where we come from and who we love matters. They matter if we let them matter to us. The earth is my first and last home. It began to matter to me when I took the time to be with Lake Erie's waves and the trees in Buffalo's parks. Notably, it didn't matter much to me before then, as one who lived in a city and seldom saw nature in a natural state. Not having participated in the natural world as I do here in the Northwest, I didn't know what I was missing for many years. Moving to Oregon opened me to a whole new world and the splendor nature unfolds at our feet, if we will only encounter her.

A Process-Oriented Gathering of all Beings

Thanks to Joanna Macy and John Seed²⁶ for their pioneering work in creating the Council of All Beings, a dreamland gathering of humans who stand in for various species, land- and water-forms, and other elemental realities of the earth in a dramatic dialogue about the needs of the earth and its component beings. When I first experienced it I was deeply moved to bring forward my deep, enduring care for this planet and her children as we donned placards signifying the earth-being for whom we would be speaking. Besides speaking for the non-human creatures, in this process one sits as a human in the midst of these voices, listening as they communicate about their situation, their needs, and their deservingness to survive. I found it a dramatically humbling confrontation.

The council process invites every voice to speak from its essence and to be heard by all the others. In its indigenous form, council process will sometimes culminate with the community's elders taking up their role and making pronouncements for the group. It is the Processmind itself which offers us the awareness to embrace the realities of all members, as well as sensing the good of the whole. The Council of All Beings is a high-dream version of democracy on earth. Arny Mindell articulated the spaciousness and extraordinary openness of the elder's awareness in Sitting in the Fire:

- The leader follows *Robert's Rule of Order*; the elder obeys the spirit.
- The leader seeks a majority; the elder stands for everyone.
- The leader sees trouble and tries to stop it; the elder sees the troublemaker as a possible teacher.
- The leader strives to be honest; the elder tries to show the truth

²⁵ Arnold Mindell, 1995, p.18

²⁶ Macy and Seed, 1988.

in everything.

- The democratic leader supports democracy; the elder does this, too, but also listens to dictators, and ghosts.

- Leaders try to be wise; elders have no minds of their own.

They follow the events of nature.

- The leader needs time to reflect; the elder takes only a moment to notice what's happening.

- The leader knows; the elder learns.

- The leader tries to act; the elder lets things be.

- The leader needs a strategy; the elder studies the moment.

- The leader follows a plan; the elder honors the direction of a mysterious and unknown river.²⁷

During the 1990s I conducted rite of passage retreats with high school students of diverse cultures. Along with hiking down to the Sandy River (and, the hard part for some, getting back up), spending time in starlit nights, and relating to the spirits of animal totems, the Council of All Beings was the primary method we used to supporting environmental awareness and responsibility.

I'll always be moved at the memory of one young son of an African American preacher who channeled a moving rap tribute to the earth during one of those councils. In a language the teens could relate to, he thanked and blessed the earth, mounting to a passionate call-and-response crescendo that brought us all into the rapture he felt.

²⁷ Mindell, 1995, p. 184

The process work approach to group work is not quite as orderly as a council process. In a process work-style process, time spirits may be dreamed up, that is, people may take up roles needed for the particular process and time. Hot spots which are intense clashes over differences will emerge, and will need to be met and engaged in order to deepen everyone's awareness of what is unfolding. People will speak from all their sides, permitting polarities to emerge, unfold, and be heard out. Roles will be taken and then may switch around. The ghost roles of people and groups not present will show up in critical situations, amplifying our awareness of all that is involved in the conflict. It will be important that the facilitators "hold down the edges" -- the edge being a point where fear or resistance may halt what is being said and impede the process. All of this provides a wonderful method for bringing out the complexity of sides involved in any issue. These and other process work tools can permit us to take up an issue as complex as the condition of the earth, as it suggests that we could be bringing in the sum of the complexity of all the beings, atmospheres and influences interacting over its of billions of years, which have evolved as the being known as Gaia, the living earth itself.

This planet, host to complex and chaotic alterations on every scale, has its own implicate order, an essential order sustained through phenomenal changes. The earth will explode, then gradually subside, erode, and quake; change is the given, but a rebalancing ensues. Similarly, process group work endeavors to hold a space for a multitude of moods, faces, conflicts and beliefs, without assuming how it will look in the end; process workers accept the fact that any resolution is bound to fracture again, perhaps in a different locale or between different voices. There is no expectation for radical group change, only the belief

that hearing one another may cause hearts to open a bit toward mutual understanding and a deeper awareness of the several issues involved.

The deep democracy in which process work has planted itself is of absolute necessity as we consider the state of the earth. Even the concept of “sustainability” is generally human-oriented, concerning itself with the earth’s ability to survive and serve the needs of humanity. Seldom is it noted that Earth itself is likely to continue, whether or not humans survive. In fact, some observers do remind us that our evolutionary drive to survive and conquer doesn’t serve our long-term needs, nor those of most other species. Curtis White states, “we don’t intend that our strategic military actions should lead to an endless and uncontrollable spiralling of violence, but it does. We don’t intend that the pursuit of our happiness should lead to the extinction of animals, desertification, famine, mass human migration, violent storms, but all that is presently ‘²⁸swimming upwards’ regardless of what we intend.” Curtis wonders if living with Costco and Best Buy in the midst of the world whose beauty we wish to sustain is like the ancients living with barbarians, as in the days when the daily rituals of the Romans were invaded by the strange Goths and barbarians. “We are,” he says, “that strange and wonderful animal that has the metaphysical comfort of *knowing* that she is part of the tragic chorus of natural beings. We are members of that faith that knows that life is indestructibly powerful and pleasurable.”²⁹

An Earth-Oriented Group Process

Part I: Innerwork: Craving to Consume -- A Deep Democracy Process

²⁸ *Orion*, May/June 2009, p. 34.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 37.

This process is intended to allow participants to discover aspects of themselves and their impact on their environment. This is a private innerwork process.

1. Encourage participants to invite all parts of their consumer-self to participate in this conversation.

Check in: who's here? Let all the parts involved in your inner dialogue on consuming and, on the other side, the parts that believe in living sustainably allow themselves be known. You might greet some familiar characters like:

- the food lover
- the lazy part who doesn't recycle
- the one who wants to do the right thing
- the lover of the earth
- the one who wants to drive a car, fast!
- an angry inner-teen junk food lover
- the gift giver
- an inner elder
- the one who loves nice things
- your own personal form of carpe diem, "life is short"

2. List these on paper, giving each a face and a gesture to identify it.

3. Conduct a group process with these voices on "Why I should act in a sustainable manner." Glance at your list to encourage all parts of you to come forward and speak up. Let the fast-driver tell the earth-lover what she thinks of him, and let the others get into the conversation, too. Write them down as you go along. Let all your voices come forward

and interact with one another. You might be surprised to find a few that weren't identified at first.

4. Continue the inner dialogue until you arrive at a feeling of temporary resolution. This might be an agreement you can (all) live with, or a feeling of mutual exhaustion, or the recognition of some non-resolvable conflict.

5. Listen: do you recognize yourself? These roles and voices are yours, but not only yours. These are the voices all of us hold; they are the reason we have internal conflicts about sustainability. These are the kinds of attitudes that keep the problem alive.

6. How do you want to relate to these parts of yourself in the future? Are there some voices you want to listen to more attentively, or some you think deserve less response? Digest the process.

7. Debrief with the entire group, if desired.

Part II: A Group Process of All Beings

A gathering of many of the voices of the earth, this exercise is suitable for groups concerned with the strains on the earth's ecosystems, the impact of human choices, the changing condition of the oceans, or any of the many issues confronting us as earthlings. Facilitation should be provided by more than one skilled facilitator if possible.

This process can be used in a classroom situation if there is someone present who has a comfortable familiarity with all the participants and the process.

1. Introduce your intention in holding this process. Perhaps it's educational, perhaps as a means of personal insight, perhaps to promote activism toward change. Thank

participants for being willing to speak for some of the silent voices of planetary beings or forces.

2. If time allows, invite individuals to introduce themselves and their personal intentions. Why are you here? What are some of your concerns for the earth?

3. Invite participants to stand and go deeply into a state of relaxed awareness. Ask, “Where is the deepest part of yourself?” Encourage them to go deeply inside, settling into the part that seems to hold the deepest self, and just be in and with that feeling.

4. Now invite participants to let themselves be led magnetically, so to speak, to a place in the world that pulls them. They may feel turned toward a certain direction and may note a related spot in that part of the world; or they may feel pulled toward a place that embodies some of their concerns. Wherever they go is perfectly right for them. Tune in to this spot; feel its atmosphere, its entire ecosystem.

5. Once present to this place, the next instruction is slightly different: “Be that place.” Let the place take you over, and surrender into it. The self dissolves and the place remains. Feel into its essence, the Processmind that underlies it all.

6. As that earth-spot, relax and see what arises, noting anything that passes into your awareness. It may be as minute as a bacterium, as insistent as an insect, as huge as a cloud formation, as wild as a cyclone. Whatever its size and energy, let this aspect of the place capture your attention.

7. Go into this being, system or atmosphere, and become it. Move as that being; sense its energies, its wants, its needs. Commune with it until you sense that you understand it from within. Know how its voice sounds and what it has to say as part of the earth’s giant system.

8. Create a sign, symbol or mask to represent this being or system whose voice you are bringing into the process.

9. Facilitator(s), invite all these beings, systems and atmospheres to gather for a conversation. Expect it to be rich and lively. Notify all the participants that they are also free to shift roles, and encourage them to participate as a human at least for a time. They can do this by setting aside their masks or symbols, changing from an animal posture or identity, etc.

10. Facilitate the process, inviting all those present to speak out. Utilize process work skills to frame the level of the interactions as personal, relational or world level; identify and hold down edges; support both sides of polarities; notice ghost roles when third parties are mentioned; investigate double signals; notice role switches, whether internal to the individual or between species, if someone comes out as human; notice and work with hot spots; and, generally, to support people to get in touch with the essence of their roles and of the issue.

11. Whenever it feels appropriate, invite participants to tap into their Processmind awareness, the sense of the essence of what they are standing for.

12. If a temporary resolution occurs, as may be noted by a shift in energy from intense to more relaxed, hold down the change in energy. Allow the process to come to a sense of completion “for now,” aware that more may arise as time passes.

13. Discuss and debrief the experience with participants to enrich everyone’s awareness of the learnings available.

Here process work tools are combined with awareness of that which underlies all that is, the Processmind, as we call it, to enhance our appreciation of the beings and systems involved in our shared home on planet earth. This Earth-based process affords a rich opportunity to tune in to the experience of other beings on the earth. In the coming chapter we will practice opening our heart and soul, as we deepen our consciousness and our humanity.

Chapter 8

Processmind in a World Context

**He who sees the Self in all beings,
and all beings in the Self,
hates none.**

--Isha Upanishad

Throughout this work we have been considering the place of Processmind alongside some of the traditional practices used around the world for self-awareness and self-surrender. In looking at the connection between Jung's theory of archetypes and the archetypal symbology held by various different geographical and historical places in the world, we are able to appreciate how Processmind works with some of the most archaic, unconscious functions of humanity: functions which involve awe, intuition, and raw, unprocessed information as conveyed through the forces at work in a given earth-spot. We saw how a practice of Processmind can lift us immediately from our personal concerns and distractions and place us in a grander context, which can be seen as the beginning of a transcendent function and akin to the stance of a shaman, who is wedded to his environment while aware of the needs of the community. Such a person, whether shaman, process worker or neither, is one who has learned to contain the hologram of a place, with all its energies, resources and beings, and taps into the essential needed qualities seamlessly. This sort of practice is one of the means process workers utilize for their work in both inner and outer worlds.

I also discussed the relationship between accessing the Processmind by sensing into the deepest part of oneself and Sufi practices of going into the heart. A fundamental difference between Sufism and Islam in general, and between Sufism and most other spiritual paths, is its deep focus on one's relationship with the divine as felt, or known, in the heart. The practice of Zikr, or Remembrance, involves rhythmically rotating around the axis of the body and bowing toward the heart as one completes each of the thousands of rotations. The initial chant "La illaha il Allah hu," or, "there is no other, there is only the One", gradually becomes abbreviated as the rotating or whirling continues. In the end, the chant is reduced to the fundamental syllable, "Hu," meaning "One."

In the same manner, while using different means, the encouragement in Processmind is to dissolve one's consciousness into what is most deep (not necessarily the heart, as each individual and cultural group seems to sense the place of essential beingness somewhat differently), and then to connect that essence to a place on the earth as a grounding point from which we can absorb significant awareness for the present moment and situation. Turning is optional, and is often employed to sense the "magnetic" pull some spot on the earth is exerting on oneself.

In the previous chapter on relating more deeply to the beings and processes occurring on the earth, we were tapping into profound teachings from African Bantu, Christian, shamanic, aboriginal and Buddhist traditions, just to name a few. The African word "ubuntu" translates roughly, "I am because you are; I need you for my existence, and you need me for yours." I am nothing without others to relate to. The Vietnamese Buddhist teacher Thich Nhat Hanh has gone so far as to name his community the Community of Interbeing, referring to the concept and experience Buddhists call "dependent co-arising."

Christians speak of “the body of Christ,” of which all are members. So when we take on the voices of other beings, as in the Group Process of All Beings (p. 81) we are speaking out of a basic, fundamental knowledge of relationship honored by virtually every tradition.

What the Shaman Saw

To continue this examination of Processmind’s relationship to the earth’s spiritual lineages, let us now go much further back in human history to the carved and painted beasts populating the caves used by our forebears of the Last Glacial Maximum in what we now call France and Spain. Rituals arose in those times that outlined some of the same recognitions human groups retain today regarding our interrelationships with one another, with the ecology of place, and with the world of spirit or mystery.

Let’s go imaginatively into the ultimate grotto of the ancient caves of Lascaux, dated to about 15,000 BCE, where the shaman initiate, depicted as barely more than a stick figure, lies on his back beneath the slightly-averted gaze of a huge bison. As there are few humans shown in any of the paleolithic cave paintings, experts have been pondering the meaning of this particular image since its discovery in the 1940s. Lately the strong argument among those who venture a theory is that the cave grottoes form a series of chambers through which shamanic initiates traveled in their preparation to be shamans. Thus we can imagine that the bird-headed man has traversed labyrinthine chambers of impenetrable darkness to arrive at this barely-attainable spot, a small room lying sixteen feet below the path above. As is often true of people in the kinds of altered states these caves can provoke (due to a deficit of oxygen, the play of oil lamps on undulating cave



walls, etc.), this initiate is depicted with an erection. The immense bison is drawn in colorful detail, in the fully articulated manner we have come to associate with the dramatic, almost otherworldly drawings of horses, bulls and other animals in those ancient caves. The animal's entrails are visibly falling out, due to a spear through its rear -- that is, having come from the direction opposite to the man. In other words, this man has not done the wounding, but he's now face-to-face with a raging bull.

My sense, as I dream into this final scene, is that it depicts the shaman's final transformation. However, no one can state for certain what is occurring here. Most think that the human is dead, or dying, but others suspect that something else was intended. In recent years, researchers have ventured the thought that he is in some sort of altered

state,³⁰ a state in which an erection is not unusual. We can see that he seems to die, but I would propose that what is meant is a psychological death to self for purposes of shamanic alchemy.

Lorimer³¹ and others suggest logically that the man's bird-head is an expression of his dissolution into the spirit of the clan depicted at the top of the staff that stands just apart from him. What has caused this therianthrope alteration, this merging of human and animal identity? My sense is that in spite of the threat to himself, the shaman is able to be aware of the animal's suffering, along with its fierceness. This idealized archetypal shaman is responding to the pain he has encountered by offering the wild beast some of his own life-force (hence the phallus) as he slips or falls into an altered state. His transformation appears to have happened spontaneously upon encountering the beast, and his surrender to the powers available only in such a state of super-consciousness is so complete that he has at once lost hold of his postural erectness and at the same time experienced an erection.

Is he dead or in the kind of altered state brought on, perhaps, by the cave's atmosphere? Dead men aren't usually stiff, in the sense we see here. But shamanically, death and the altered state are the same. What dies is the self; so yes, he is virtually dead to his primary everyday experience in that he is not simply fleeing; but no, I think he is otherwise quite alive to the totality of what is present, that is, both to the bison's fierceness and to its huge pain, as well to as his own fight/flight reaction. In that sense, he has attained what he must have entered the cave to attempt; he is able to surpass his own fear and concurrently perceive the dual reality of the fierceness of the bison's attack and, at the same time, its

³⁰ Lorimer, 2009.

³¹ *Ibid.*

fatal wounding. This represents the height of shamanic awareness, at any time, or in any place: awareness of the situation at hand, and presence enough to remain in service.

Processmind brings the process worker into the role of shaman. The shamanic process worker is able to note the other's suffering or problem and recognize himself, with his own experiences and knowledge of this kind of suffering. "You today, me tomorrow," he may think, knowing that we all will experience the painful challenges of human life, all will hurt others and be hurt ourselves, all be stricken with illnesses and the loss of loved ones, and all know how confusing human life inevitably is, at times. She will also need to continue to practice Processmind to remember what is most essential, that which lies in the deepest part of the self, and how that ties each of us inextricably to all others in the mysteries life brings us all.

The Processmind-aware process worker may be able to invite the one with the disturbance into some altered state to experience a shift in perspective on the issue. "Burning our wood" via group processes, inner work, dreamwork, and an undying curiosity about life, provides us with preparation for the shamanic role today.

The so-called "ego" must die if one is to be present to suffering and open to the fact that whatever change is to occur is a matter between the sufferer and the unseen powers that move through our lives, and not the personality of the shaman, or process worker. Healing is not the ambition of the shaman; the shaman's agency lies in inviting the sufferer to relinquish his or her attachment to ordinary reality for a moment to be open to the re-balancing energies available. To do so, the shaman has to go through the same door as the one who suffers, and stand as a true and willing witness.

At Lascaux, we do not find a next panel that reveals that the bison and the human “get healed” and move on from this place. This is it: the bird-shaman continuously sees what the bison is going through, and the bison continues to suffer through the eons. Again, in the therapeutic situation as in the group process work, no one is specifically healed, but something in our world is made whole.

Chöd, or Shamanic Buddhism

Similarly, the ancient practice of Chöd combines Buddhist meditation with an ancient Tibeto-Siberian shamanic ritual of self-surrender. “Chöd is a more advanced form of shamanism, which has been raised to a higher level of perfection...”³²

The way of the shaman has always been a path that involves communion with other powers and spirits. The attainment of enlightenment is not the shaman’s goal at all. A shaman by definition is “someone who works with spirits to help others.”³³ The shaman channels these nature spirits to accomplish definite ends, such as healing or gaining access to knowledge of some kind, as opposed to the pursuit of personal enlightenment.

The Tibetan practice of Chöd (*cutting off*) combines the paths toward enlightenment and shamanism into one. Chöd is a spiritual practice conducted by the individual alone in the wilderness, where, like the Lascaux initiate, she must learn to face every fear and every bit of ego-clinging within herself. Indeed, to accomplish this, she is instructed to deliberately go to places that inspire supernatural dread – not deep into caves, but in the wilderness without. “A cemetery, or any wild site whose physical aspect awakens feelings of terror, is

³² Gyalwa Karmapa website.

³³ Hutton, *Shamans*, Hambleton & London, London 2007.

considered to be an appropriate spot.”³⁴ Traditionally the practitioner sets up a tent in a wild and lonely spot, a place that seems imbued with power or haunted by spirits or actual wild beasts. Like the prehistoric shamans in the impenetrable darkness of Magdalenian caves, the chöd initiate has to confront all the supernatural fears created by such a place.

Essential to Chöd is the development of empathic altruism, since the only thing that can dissolve the emotional distance between the Chöd-practitioner and communion with other beings is altruistic love. One really does have to learn to love everyone and everything. Some think this is a particular challenge for Westerners:

All western, and especially English education is instinct with the principle of emulation and competition; each boy is urged to learn more quickly, to outstrip his companions, and to surpass them in every possible way. What is mistakenly called "friendly rivalry" is assiduously cultivated, and the same spirit is fostered and strengthened in every detail of life. With such ideas 'educated into him' from his childhood, how can a Westerner bring himself to feel towards his co-students 'as the fingers of one hand'? He who would be a student [of Tibetan occultism] must first be strong enough to kill out in his heart all feelings of dislike and antipathy to others.³⁵

However, chöd is an illustration of the effort required to attain this degree of relinquishment of the self, even for these Tibetan Buddhists.

Unconditional love means especially a love of compassion for those we least would want to be intimate with, such as the attacking bison in the Lascaux shaft. If we are going to be companions to people in suffering states, we have to be ready to be intimate with them.

³⁴ David-Neel, Alexandra. With Mystics and Magicians in Tibet, p. 139

³⁵ Blavatskaya, 1931.

We have to share their pain, their confusion, their suffering, and their active negativity. To do so we must be familiar with and compassionate toward those same qualities in our own lives. We need to know ourselves, and beyond having simply accepted what we have found within ourselves, we need to have discovered how these human realities can be tools for transformation. In order to be able to offer the presence needed, we need to have learned to relate to our identity lightly and not take ourselves too seriously, even when we fear something might be taken from us. This is a matter of practice, of living, and of wood being burned.

The chöd practitioner achieves this by training in Maitri meditation, a meditation on love. All the walls protecting the heart from feeling total, unconditional altruism are systematically torn down. There must be no emotional distancing between the practitioner and the object of his compassion. “The experience of nonduality arises as the clinging demon of egocentricity dissolves.”³⁶

According to Gyalwa Karmapa, who introduced the American Buddhist nun Tsultirm Allione to the biography of Chöd’s founder, Machig Labdron³⁷, in the practice of Chöd one meditates in order to become absorbed, then surrenders and offers one's body and self. This selfless offering traditionally occurs when the practitioner is finally absorbed into trance (*samadhi*) through the use of the ritual, aided by the steady beat of the drum and bell. The adept of Chöd, uttering a secret mantra, then leaves her body, mounting the sky in the aspect of the Secret Gnostic Dakini, and there, in the mind-made-body of the Dakini, Who is black as night itself, she severs the metaphysical mind-body complex. She then feeds the spirits the energy used to bind the Ego in the mind-body form. In devouring

³⁶ Allione, 2008, p. 233.

³⁷ Allione, 2008., pp. 34-5

this, they become liberated, as does the practitioner herself. This "offering up of one's body," if done properly, can effect healing, and many a Chödpa [practitioner] has been called in to arrest the course of a plague or epidemic.³⁸

The lesson in Chöd is clear and simple: If you do not slay this clinging to a self, then good and bad spirits (*lha-dre*) have you at their mercy. A further grasp arises when one realizes that everything is mind, or shall we say Processmind; when the emptiness of mind itself is realized, then no duality between the "cutter" and the "cut" remains. This is known in process work as the level of essence, of ultimate, shared reality, where one is essentially willing to be used for the purposes of the moment, even if some CR parts are in disagreement. In process work we might say that we are both a wonderful, complex self, and also no self at all, and that they are dreaming together. At any given moment, we might lose or forget the self in favor of the wounded ones in our situation, be it a world situation, or interpersonal, or personal. And in that moment, we will do well to tap into our Processmind awareness as a source of essence-base clarity in our actions.

In the Tibetan chöd practice, once the yogini has recognized the non-existence of inner and outer phenomena and the psychic energy (prana-vayu) has entered and started to rise up the central nervous system, then she will begin to experience extraordinary states of ecstasy and clairvoyant perception will begin to emerge, not unlike the initiate in the caves during the Magdalenian period. "Shamans the world over, to gain power and spirit allies, must make this dangerous journey to the other world where they are 'killed', ritually dismembered and reassembled into a unique human who can traverse multiple universes, engage with dangerous beings, redress energetic balance between worlds, and heal

³⁸ Gyalwa Karmapa, website

illness.”³⁹ They will acquire the transpersonal consciousness needed to aid vast numbers of sentient beings everywhere, to be of service in what process workers call the “worldwork” level of practice. Intending at a conscious, CR level to no longer be wedded to a personal identity, the chodpa dedicates himself like a bodhisattva to the well-being, enlightenment, and the greater good of all.

Chöd therefore is a blend of the Buddhist path to enlightenment, which is highly mental, and an ancient form of Shamanic ritual introduced by the yogini Machig Labdrön (1055-1153) that was native to Tibet. It was the merging of these two streams which resulted in the actual emergence of Chöd as a practice used by yogis today, in their desire to gain Enlightenment by the shortest possible path. Thus Chöd is a form of shamanism, raised to a higher level of challenge. Its essential intention is similar to various Christian practices and its honorable tradition of martyrdom, to the Lakota practice of Sun Dance, and no doubt to many other versions around the world; it represents a universal understanding about how transformation can occur.

Chöd. Her approach is more psychological than metaphysical, and the demons we are to feed are those that plague us personally. She advises that we engage our split-off and disowned dragons of addiction, fear or obsession quite directly, getting to know what they really want, and feeding them from our deepest being. For instance, the alcoholic is trying to soothe something; is it merely the craving for a drink, or is it a much deeper emptiness?⁴⁰ What does it really want, she urges us to inquire? How will this demon feel if its wants and needs are satisfied?

³⁹ Jodi Lorimer, 2009, p. 21

⁴⁰ Allione, 2008, p. 48.

What we really give the spirits to feast on is the energy used to bind ourselves into conventionally acceptable behaviors while in the mind-body form. In devouring this, energy they become liberated, as does the practitioner.⁴¹ Ideally, the demon's energy has been transformed into a guiding awareness for our conscious, CR lives. As we feed the demon from our own beings, willingly giving it our attention and the finest of our energies, we are simultaneously fed. Alchemically, our most ungainly elements are converted via this profound awareness practice into a deep sense of compassion for all beings, even our worst demons, based on consciousness of our own weaknesses. David-Neel remarks on the dramatic transformational effects observed among Chödpas:

I have had the rare opportunity of beholding some of these ascetics, tall men of Kham, clad in the picturesque garb of the hermits, their plaited hair falling to their feet. Under the starry sky, they danced to the strange music of hand-drums and femur-trumpets, in these majestic wilds which lay at the summit of our globe. On their ecstatic faces shone the proud joy of having trampled down the feelings that keep the mind feverish through hopes and fears, through “the burning thirst,” “the distressing race toward mirages.”

And then they sank into endless meditations that kept them till late after dawn sitting cross-legged, the body erect, the gaze cast down, motionless, like stone images.

It was a sight never to be forgotten.⁴²

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Allione, 2008, p. 154.

Chöd and Process Work

Process work is a direct descendent of these 17000-year old and 1000-year-old traditions. It is interesting to find that the Karmapa⁴³ reminds us that according to the beliefs of psychics and Tibetan mystics, the physical world perceived by our five senses is only a small portion of the total reality in which we live. All around us are invisible entities; types of "beings" or "spirits" which we cannot see. These entities exist in parallel, but separate, dimensions or worlds of their own. Nevertheless all these "parallel" realms are part of the same planet. For example, what appears as a river to us, might seem to be a current of color and energy within the realm of the Shining Devas. Mindell teaches, similarly, of the possibility of parallel worlds that are options in the life of every particle as well as every human being.⁴⁴

The successful and creditable process worker is one who sees through the attack and the attacker, the demon-spirit, at one level of awareness, and rather than accepting the ordinary level of reality is able to note at another level, or parallel world, the great wound the demon carries (as the great bison in the shaft with the man, for instance) rather than just the fierceness of its horns. He is the world worker who cuts through the unawareness of his everyday self and offers his bodily presence as a nectar to the "gods and demons," or the forces of the Processmind, that great mystery which is greater than what we can know, achieve or control – which seems to have its own patterns and tendencies. When we surrender to the powers greater than ourselves, even those within ourselves of which we

⁴³ Gyalwa Karmapa, website

⁴⁴ Mindell, 2000, p. 231.

haven't been conscious, we are emptying ourselves into the essence level, or Processmind, which is always attempting to find out more about itself and its own growth.⁴⁵

The training today, as in these ancient traditions, is to be with ourselves and our beastly demons, that is, with all of our parts, and to learn to be fearless with them, to acknowledge them and their tender reality, and then to bring that compassion to the harsh and unrelenting world in which tragedy strikes, war happens, conflict persists over generations, and healers are endlessly called for.

Perhaps what is strange is not that this tradition goes back so very far, but that the lineage is often not assumed to be enduring into the present. Shamanism is not only practiced among the Bush people of Africa and the Aboriginals in Australia; it was not totally lost in the extermination of those women and men who carried the ancient medicine traditions of the earth. While many methods and traditions may have been lost to us over the centuries, it still seems to be an aspect – indeed a balancing aspect – of the human species to generate the shamans we need for the times in which we live.

The traditions of training may appear to change. The Karmapa's website insists that "The student of Chöd must receive proper transmission and permission to practice Chöd. This transmission is a spiritual blessing that is passed down in an unbroken lineage through a line of wisdom-masters, and as such protects the student on this most advanced, critical path of endeavor." Furthermore, the disciple needs to learn the proper intonation of the mystic mantras; the manner for beating the drum, the sounding of the spirit-evoking horn made of human thighbone, and the rhythm of the bell. Each Chöd transmission has a certain specific "liturgy" of its own, and this has to be carefully adhered to.⁴⁶ After all the

⁴⁵ Mindell, 2009.

⁴⁶ Gyalwe Karmapa, website.

acts of the performance have been thoroughly mastered, the practitioner, in the dark of the night, has to confront all his supernatural fears.

In process work we call this business of encountering our own issues “burning our wood,” to suggest our willingness to extinguish whatever is in the way of our beautiful true nature shining through, although “burning our wood” may not seem to suggest the degree of self-immolation that chöd and the Lascaux shaman seem to represent. Chöd would have us practice visualizing chopping up our bodies to feed the demons that come to us; and in the final chamber at Lascaux, the initiate is seen both dying and apparently offering his liveliness (as the erect phallus) to the animal with which he is exchanging life force. I say “exchanging life force” for a reason. While it may be hoped that the beastly demon will be transformed and healing will happen, the process work understanding is that there is no “other,” no beast that is not also ourselves, and so no healing in which we do not share. We can only be present with any person’s or group’s pain or suffering by recognizing its demonic side as our own and taking it on authentically, that is, by knowing that part of ourselves. So when we meet with a client, we meet as one who shares that person’s essential reality as a human being who struggles, suffers, has blind spots, wants happiness, etc. The notion of client, of sick or suffering person, or of dysfunctional system is recognized to apply to ourselves at the same time. If we have burned our own wood we will have discovered that, as Terence said, “nothing human is alien to me.”⁴⁷

Are we learning to be today’s shamans? Are we preparing to enter the diplomatic arenas, the hospital rooms, the chambers of legislatures and the therapeutic offices with hearts of total compassion opened by the demons of self-encounter? I don’t know. Maybe. I hope so. More to the point, though, is the fact, or feeling, that only those who are already

chosen as shamans come through the doors into a study like process work, and few who haven't been shaped as shamans walk out. Process work's roads lead to shamanic initiation, or chöd, or self-relinquishment. We aren't meant to get out of here alive. When we have walked those paths, getting acquainted with our own demons and discovering what they can become when they're well-fed, we may be ready to step into the fire and facilitate the unexpected. We can train ourselves via Chöd and process work's similar self-awareness methods to recognize a voice very like our own in the attacker, the victim, the grieving one, the one in love – in everyone and everything. As the song says, "Grant that I may see you, [O Mystery, O Processmind] always, in every thing."

When the fearful one comes to an edge of his ability to speak, as a facilitator, I need to understand his fear and help her to protect his edge or support him in going over it. And when the one with rank tries to be honest about her inner conflicts over rank, I want to know my own experience of that ambivalence, too. Yet not in the moment; rather, *already*. I need to *already* have met those parts of myself, and tended to them with genuine compassion, so they're no longer raw enough to trigger me in my facilitation. I need to have "died" and fed the demons my own body parts, as in Chöd, so they can grow, thrive and be eminently transformed into the skills, abilities, vulnerabilities and awarenesses I need to carry if I want to do process work with a true heart. As I do this letting-go, what comes in to fill the space is just what is: Processmind, which has the capacity for everything life unfolds.

Yet it's fair to ask, am I dead yet? Have I surrendered myself as food not for gods, but for demons?

⁴⁷ Terence, *Heauton Timoroumenos*, l. 77.

Did I come here to die? Did any shamanic initiates? Or were they, like us, pulled along, a journey chamber at a time, deeper and deeper into the caves of being itself, into what Zorba called “the full catastrophe,” with all its messes, blessings and wonders? For us, the pain of the world commands us to look, and the demons will eat us fiercely if we fail to feed them, to assuage the world’s pain through our own immolation and transformation.

How have I done my dying? They say that all of us who are living, who have entered into life, are dying, or entering into death. For me it can look like this: on the same day that a person seeking inner healing tells me about the priest who abused him, my pregnant daughter announces that her significant other has lost his job, while I wrangle with my own beloved over the meaning she sees in a look on my face, and I hold in my heart the Mumbaiians who died when fanatics shot up whomever they saw. We can die daily, if we are awake. Is more required? Is daily dying enough? Do we also need to go to the cemeteries and the charnel grounds when we partly live there, if we are awake to all of life? Isn’t everything coming, and going, while unfolding its beautiful true nature?

My thought is that if we haven’t gone to the hard places voluntarily, we will be taken there. Life catches up with us. For students of process work, we have somehow realized the necessity of going through this particular doorway into dying and being reborn as ourselves, and also not ourselves. That is, we are engaged in a process of knowing and embracing, and maybe even transforming, all of who we are, as well as all of who everyone is, the killer and the saint, the child and the criminal, the oppressed and the oppressor alike. We are here to see both the wounding and the glory, the fierceness and the neediness of the other, and to know her as not-other. Ubuntu: I am because you are; we are absolutely interconnected. I would not be here if you were not also. Mindell

reminds us of the fundamental entanglement of beings which have ever been connected. Ubuntu captures this principle of physics as it applies on the plane of human interactions.

I remember a conversation with a friend who was heading off to his fourth Sun Dance, where he would attach a leather rope to his chest and dance, bleeding, in the hot summer sun for four days to strengthen his warriorship. When I wondered whether it was something I might imagine doing, he assured me I had already done mine: women who have given birth have been through their initiation, according to the Lakota tradition. So, there are many ways of donating one's life.

Part of the genius of process work training lies in its deep connection with the earth. In this paper we are considering the earth-based practice of Processmind, using the earth as a guide for one's moment-to-moment and day-to-day choices and actions. Earth is the home of shamanism and of process work and human life. When Mara, the great demon, challenged the Buddha at the end of a night of profound temptations, asking by what power the Buddha was able to resist him, the Buddha's response was to touch his hand to the earth, his witness, his home, his source of wisdom and strength. Processmind brings that same awareness. Processmind contains the earth, and all that unfolds. In that sense, Processmind is the space that holds every group process or conflictual situation, and it is the net we trust in, beneath what we can be aware of in CR, dreamland and essence level. It is that essence that is beyond our knowing, in which we can find ourselves comfortably "gone" while still functioning.

Like the Buddha at his enlightenment, the shaman arises from the earth and lives closely with her. Earth reveals all we need to know, if we learn to hear its voices. Processmind practice offers a ready means for tuning in.

Today, my experience of deer-nature (cf. Introduction) is largely a wonderful memory. As Arnold Mindell puts it, “I was enlightened once. Then I became unenlightened again.”⁴⁸ This is not to say that I don’t return to that state of wonder and even tap into the deer’s transformational powers any more; in fact, I’m basking in its inspiring presence even now. Mindell’s point is that we must be in the state needed for the moment. Sometimes we need a consensus-reality focus to make a shopping list; sometimes we drift into edifying, or non-edifying, or wild, dream states; and at other times, as in my deer trance, we transcend what is known and familiar and discover our profound and essential connection to all that is of the earth, and to Being itself. In Processmind practice, we train ourselves to do it consciously.

That we are all “stardust,” all part of what is, is the point. Knowing this can be sufficient grounds for living in, as, and out of our beautiful true nature, and for living at home on the earth with other beings. Like our Lascaux friend, we can see that we all suffer, and all want to be understood; that we all lose our heads and become aggressive at times, and that releasing our “selves” and going into the world of essence permits us to touch and know the pulse of all life.

Applied Shamanism

A Process Work Chöd Practice: taming our demons

1. State a current problem situation or disturbance (this may be the suffering of a loved one, an issue in the world, or something which is disturbing you personally.)
2. Name the parts involved, as roles. For instance, a family scene might include the wounded child, the angry parent, and the onlooker. In a world scene, we might see the

⁴⁸ Mindell, class, “Three Basic States of Consciousness and Their Wisdoms,” Feb. 13, 2009

oppressed, the oppressor, the distant witness, and the ghost role of an ambassador. In a workplace scenario we might find the ghost role of the absent corporate “parent,” the conflicted manager, overworked employees, etc. Name the roles you are able to identify and imagine in the scene you are concerned about.

3. Using words and movement, express the primary or familiar state of each role. (E.g., the wounded child might look scared.) Do this for each role until you have portrayed the situation as it usually occurs. Make a little drawing of each role’s primary state when in the conflict.

4. Using words and movement, express the deeper feeling behind each role. (E.g., the wounded child might feel hurt underneath his fear.) Do this for each role, allowing your body to portray and enact this deeper reality to help gain a strong sense of the role’s experience. Again, draw a small picture of each role’s inner feelings.

5. See if you can recognize and feel the difference between each role’s primary appearance and its internal feeling. What does each role really want and need? How will it change if it receives what it needs?⁴⁹ Write that next to the pictures of the inner aspects of the roles.

6. Processmind spot: Now, quiet yourself deeply. Go to the deepest part of yourself. Feel the place in you that connects directly to what is most essential.

7. Once there, let it connect you mindlessly to a spot on the earth that speaks to you right now. Be in that place; see it, feel it, and know it. Then, become that place as fully as you can, letting go of your sense of a self in the moment. Feel the sentient essence of the place, its atmosphere, its inhabitants, its rhythms, the exchanges among its beings and

⁴⁹ Based on Allione, 2008, p. 257.

energies. Surrender personal identity for now, diffusing your awareness into the place you've been drawn to.

8. Notice whatever about the place captures your attention. Open yourself to that aspect, or to some small flirt, and know it as the very thing needed for this problem. This could be the atmosphere of the place, an animal encountered there, an element of the landscape, or anything that catches your eye. Ask, what is the quality or message of that small flirt that brings new insight?

9. Let that quality be the nectar you now bring to the various states or roles you discovered before. With a consciousness of the Processmind aspect you are bringing, prepare to feed the beast what it really wants. One at a time, offer each of the inner faces what it wants. Give it not only mentally, but also physically. Using movement, feed the hungry one the food, the embrace, the energy, the understanding, the wisdom, or whatever you have been given to offer.

10. Finally, prepare to feed the whole scene by returning to the Processmind place. Let yourself give this original situation the response it needs to move toward a temporary resolution, a feeling of ease, or whatever arises when you connect to your Processmind place. What insights or learning does this PM experience have to offer to this difficult situation, and also to yourself, your community, and the world?

11. Return to your Processmind spot and allow your CR to become aware of what this practice has revealed. Drink it in; let it seep into all your cells.

Chapter 9

Conclusion

**For sixty years I have been forgetful,
every minute,
but not for a second
has this flowing toward me stopped, or slowed.
I deserve nothing.
Today I recognize
that I am the guest the mystics talk about.
I play this living music for my host.
Everything today is for the host.**

--Jalaluddin Rumi

As Within, So Without

As I approached writing a conclusion to this study I wanted to be mentally transported to a spot on the earth and, once there, to tap into a flirt from the Processmind. Once I was in touch with the deepest part of myself, I began to turn my body in place, eyes shut, just waiting to sense when to stop. All at once I knew to stop (as is always true when I do this.) I opened my eyes to see I was facing in a sharp northwesterly direction. From Portland, this direction goes to the ocean and across perhaps to Siberia or Korea. I love the sense of being transported across the globe, not knowing where I will “land” or why – but all of a sudden my mental journeying stopped, just off the southwest shore of Washington. “Why here?” I began to wonder – then noticed I found myself among the oyster beds of Willapa Bay. Oysters quickly led my awareness to pearls, and the inner pearl that is

Processmind, when encountered in that “deepest part” of oneself. At the same time, it is the great wholeness, the unremitting mystery, the end point of all searching, and the context of all that is. The pearl within is also the wealth all about us, in every person, in every blessing or problem, in every single moment.

It was my intention in this paper to offer a workshop based in practices drawing on Arny Mindell’s concept of the Processmind, as well as to frame Processmind’s legitimate place in the lineage of practices and traditions we earthlings have utilized to relate to the great mystery of the cosmos and what underlies all that is.

The leadership workshop I developed to articulate some of the practical applications of the Processmind approach (see Appendix) supported my belief that Processmind has immeasurable promise for assistance in living one’s life. In the classes and workshop, we used it effectively to find empowerment, support ourselves in dealing with personal and workplace conflicts, and discover a trustworthy connection to our most fundamental truths.

Processmind also revealed its genetic relationship to Sufism’s focus on journeying inward to honor and commune with what is, “Allah” in the language of Islam. We found that while the Sufi tradition turns around the heart, Processmind practice encourages us to go to the place that is deepest for each individual in the moment at hand. And while Sufism endeavors to generate a heart-based community, process work opens itself to the whole of our human experience, its deep democracy an admission of the inevitable reality that we are complex beings functioning at several levels, full of contradictions and polarities.

Beyond the heart to the bones and sinews, we examined the esoteric Buddhist practice of Chöd as a model for transforming one's most troublesome states into tools of transcendent awareness. Similarly, we found that Processmind-based practices can permit us to travel inward, accessing metaskills we can apply to even the most intractable situations.

We have also traced the relationships between shamanism and Processmind approaches, both earth-based practices that rely on a deep, basic orientation to the earth's own systems for information and guidance regarding one's choices and behaviors. Like shamanism, process work takes careful note of the signals arising in the world around us, and encourages us to transport ourselves into altered states for their potential to transformation. In many respects, process work represents a current synthesis of the shamanic traditions found around the world.

Further experiments await: how can a mentality of Processmind and its earth-based approaches be brought to bear in personal relationships? How might it serve us as we facilitate worldwork processes? What insights might its application bring to working with those in extreme mental states? Can it be practiced like a form of spirituality – and if so, is that a good thing?

For me, process work's conceptualization of Processmind serves to assure me of the underlying wholeness of the unfolding cosmos. Through its lens the deer who baptized me "Deer Heart" joins forces with Crater Lake's archetypal powers, seamlessly knitting meaning into my life journey, brilliantly supporting me to embrace the daily procession of grace and pain locked arm in arm, robust with the beauty of their true nature.

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APPENDIX

PROCESSMIND EXERCISE

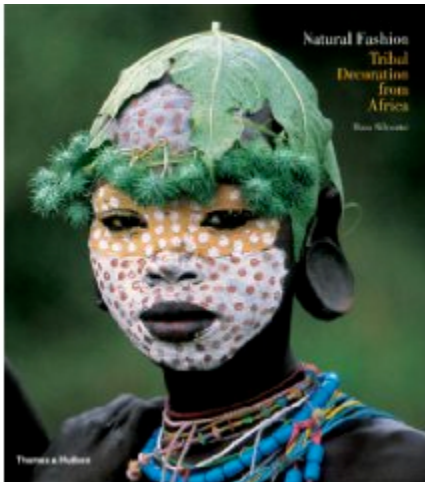
IN PAIRS, with one person guiding the other:

1. Quiet your body, loosen your mind. Relax the body deeply and sense into what is the deepest part of yourself.
2. Turn yourself around and feel in what direction you're pulled.
3. Notice what this direction means, as a direction on the compass or just as a magnetic pull. For instance, sometimes if you go south you go to Mt. Tabor, sometimes to Antarctica. Notice now what piece of land that is associated with for you.
4. Sink more fully into that place. Allow yourself to notice the experience there. Does it have personal significance? Historic? Are the land forms powerful? Feel into how this spot affects you personally.
5. Notice the atmosphere there. Slowly, become that spot. Feel yourself as that place, allowing yourself to move, if you wish, as that place. Notice any flirts or small aspects that capture your attention and help you to surrender into becoming that place. For now, you are that. Discover what it feels like, is like, to be this place on earth. Notice all that's there and sense into its essence.
6. It can be helpful to write or draw a bit about this – a few words, a gesture, to capture it in some way.
7. Now, *as* that part of the earth, what are your attributes of leadership? What do you know, see, hold within you? What can you do, endure, handle? How do you operate, and lead, when you *are* that spot?
8. In this place and as this earth-spot, find the responses to the question, Who am I naturally? What are my interests, gifts and talents?
9. What is the hardest thing for me about taking leadership? What does the Processmind have to say about that?
10. Take a few moments to make a note about your experience before switching roles.

PROCESSMIND SPOT	CHARACTERISTICS NOTICED	QUESTION/ PROBLEM	RESPONSE

Beautiful True Nature

The Process Mind Path of Sustainable Leadership



BEAUTIFUL TRUE NATURE



THE EARTH-PATH OF SUSTAINABLE
LEADERSHIP

Goals

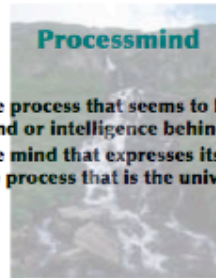
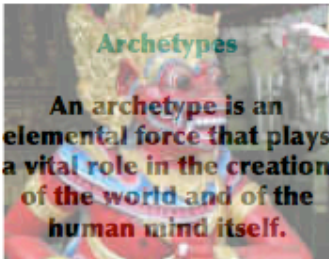
- Learn how to let the earth guide you
- Connect personal leadership to love of the earth
- Deepen leadership skills
- Deepen eldership
- Optimize sustainability in all you do

AGENDA

- Processmind, a new tool for leaders
- Leadership and sustainability
- Entelechy and polarities
- Leadership in conflict situations
- Leadership in group situations
- Leadership and eldership

Why we're here

- Personally, not metaphysically
- What are you hoping to get from this experience?



All the buddhas and all the sentient beings are nothing but the one mind...

beside which nothing exists

--Huang Po

The problem contains the solution

Characteristics of Sustainable Leadership

Two Practices

**Processmind Practice
Processmind Chart**

Processmind Practice

- **Magnetic pull**
- **Surrender**
- **Finding/feeling significance**
- **Asking questions, posing problems**
- **Getting useful information**

Deepening Processmind

- Who am I naturally?
- What are my interests, gifts and talents?
- What is the hardest thing for me about taking leadership?
- What does the Processmind say about that?

Processmind Chart

A useful tool for personal growth

Try it -- it's fun!

PROCESS-MIND SPOT	CHARACTERISTICS NOTICED	QUESTION/PROBLEM	RESPONSE
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PM Applications

- Communication
- Decisionmaking
- Conflict
- Group participation
- Group facilitation
- Leadership

Metaskills for Communication

- “Soft skills” for effectiveness
- Create sustainability
- The “how” of what you do
- Arises from compassion and deep democracy

Deep Democracy

- All voices are welcome
- All voices are needed
- All voices are valued
- All voices have valuable contributions

3 Levels of Awareness

- Consensus Reality
- Dreamland (Non-CR)
- Essence

Processmind and Conflict



Group-Related Issues

- **3 Levels of Awareness**
- **Deep democracy**
- **Roles/polarities**
- **Ghost roles**
- **Rank**
- **Edges and hot spots**

Roles

- **Roles: bigger than any individual; may switch; may be personal, but are often “dreamed up”**
- **Ghosts are roles in the field that are named but not present (the government, the enemy, the boss)**

Rank

- **Social**
- **Structural**
- **Psychological**
- **Spiritual (eldership)**

Edges and Hot Spots

- **Edge:** point of resistance, where known and unknown meet
- **Hot spot:** marked by reaction within the group, it may mark a moment of change or potential transformation



Eldership

- **Personal deep democracy**
- **World deep democracy; the world as your child**
- **Sense of the mystery behind it all**
- **Processmind as “the bigger elder” or the “elder elder”**

Happy trails!

