

Worldwork and the Politics of “Dreaming” or Why “Dreaming” is Crucial for World Process

By Amy Mindell, November 2007

(thanks for referring to www.aamindell.net when quoting this article)



The Bread and Puppet Theater’s Resurrection Circus

Introduction

From protest music to Mardi Gras, from healing rituals to theater, all over the world and throughout time people have turned to special transformative and artistic modalities for greater understanding and inspiration. For example, the idea of “Dreaming Together” has been central to many Aboriginal cultures as a means to connect with the spirits and powers within and beyond the known world, to gain wisdom, and to discover new community directions and resolutions.

History has witnessed again and again the often painful shift from aboriginal cultures, which have dreaming as a central aspect of community life, to cosmopolitan cultures,

which are totally predicated on individualistic, reality-based values; from shamanistic practice to scientific knowledge. Although all approaches can be important at one time or another, the tension and conflicts between these two cultural modes have remained a heartrending and often marginalized legacy of human history. In many aspects of cosmopolitan cultures today, the everyday “doing” of life remains cut off from more altered, relaxed, or fanciful experiences. People go to work and *then* go to parties; people attend meetings to discuss issues, and *then* go to the movies. Both realms are very important yet often remain quite separate.

Worldwork, the small- and large-group application of process work developed by my partner and husband Arny Mindell in the 1980s, is a new paradigm in community work that attempts to bring creative, dreamlike awareness and expression together with more “rational” and linear ways of working with social, organizational, group, and political issues.¹ Worldwork is a revolutionary approach to group and community process whose premise is that we need access to *all* levels of group awareness in order to create sustainable change.

Every group, community, or nation has a “Consensus Reality” – the view of the world that it defines as real and to which most people give consent as reality. In addition there is a “Dreaming Reality” that permeates group life but about which people do not generally agree. This dreaming realm consists of all the background feelings, hopes, visions, dreams, body signals, roles, and spirits that pervade and strongly influence a group’s atmosphere, but which are rarely focused upon consciously. Worldwork sees both realities as two crucial sides of a coin that turn again and again during the course of any community process. In fact, these realities are not distinctly separate but imbedded within one another. Neither reality alone is enough to deal with group tension and social change; both are needed. When we use awareness to follow the flow of change and interaction as it winds through consensual discussions and the dreaming background of community life, issues deepen and potentially new and sustainable resolutions can be found. In this way, worldwork contributes to the healing of the historical split between these two seemingly disparate worlds.

Over the years I have been passionate about the dreaming and artistic part of worldwork. Recently I felt compelled to write this article following one of our seminars focusing on issues around New Orleans and Hurricane Katrina. The masks, music, and artistry of New Orleans reminded me of the important role that artistic modalities bring to the expression and potential healing of collective experience. I have also been touched by the dreaming experiences Arny and I have had during shamanistic healings with aboriginal people in various parts of the world. I have felt moved by many worldwork experiences in which groups have moved between the consensual and dreaming realities and in so doing have deepened the discussion and developed more sustainable social change.

This article is also a response to several questions that sometimes arise during worldwork processes. When social issues are so pressing, some people wonder why a group should leave consensus reality and temporarily enter the dreaming level of awareness. Why express the sides of an issue in terms of fluid roles that people can move in and out of? Isn’t it all *just play*? Shouldn’t we be serious about serious things? And what does this dreaming



Coming together after Creative Dance

reality have to do with actual social change? In this article I hope to begin to answer some of these questions. I find these queries extremely important. To answer them helps to articulate and highlight the paradigm shift that worldwork brings to community and organizational process.

I briefly outline the way in which many of forms of dreaming have been an essential part of group, community, and organizational process throughout time. I describe the way in which consensus reality and dreaming are not completely separate realities but are part of one another. I speak about the way in which both realms can be used in the service of greater awareness and social change. I discuss the way in which a good facilitator will use her or his awareness to notice the existence of all levels of reality and bring them to bear upon the issues at hand in a useful way. I will also speak about my own passion for the subject, define and discuss worldwork, and offer some ideas about the way in which the dreaming level can be incorporated into group and organizational interactions.

The 1,2,3 of this article. *In essence, the article shows how dreaming in community process can (1) help navigate more fully community tensions, (2) bring about more sustainable resolutions, and (3) contribute to healing the historical split between these two diverse yet central approaches to community life.*

But let me begin with ...YouTube!

* * *

The YouTube Debate



One day last August 2007, I found myself becoming surprisingly excited while watching a debate between Democratic presidential candidates in the United States. Until this point, I hadn't been particularly interested in the debates, imagining that they would bring nothing new that I hadn't heard previously.

The format on this particular night was different than typical debates, which normally involve three or four pre-arranged questioners. During this debate the people asking questions were everyday folks posing queries via YouTube, a free website that allows users to upload and share videos with one another. The images of the questioners appeared on a big screen. The first YouTube speaker (who was also from Portland, Oregon!) echoed my own momentarily one-sided mood when he said something to the effect that, if the candidates would do something revolutionary during this debate, they would actually answer the questions instead of beating around the "bush."

As the debate proceeded, I became more and more engaged. It was refreshing to hear the questions of everyday citizens who wouldn't normally be heard in such a venue. And I was especially delighted when, to my great surprise, a snowman appeared on the screen as one of the YouTube questioners! The snowman spoke about... what else? ...the problem of global warming!

Why did all of this make me so happy? After much pondering, I realized that in my heart, I am hoping for a world where art and creative experience can arise and be embraced in both political and personal life. I do enjoy discourse on the everyday, consensual plain. Yet I hope that the world of politics and collective life can also make room for the

spontaneous, artistic, and dreaming dimensions of life that lie just at the edge of ordinary discussions. As a therapist and teacher of process work I also know that my longing is not only a matter of my preference for artistic expression. Rather I know that getting in touch with what is behind the surface—the dreaming that supports everyday reality—can not only bring relief to individuals but is *crucial* for sustainable resolutions in group and world situations. I longed for these experiences to arise in the public and political arena. If that occurred, I felt it would be enriching for those of us listening to the debate as well as for the candidates. Yet making this shift would be a kind of revolution in consciousness that would mean valuing not only what is being said but the dreamlike background of the discussion. So, when the snowman appeared, it brought a sense of relief and happiness to my heart.

My Personal Quest

For me, the quest to bring the world of everyday reality and dreaming close together is very personal. Although I am very passionate about consensus reality and helping to facilitate real, outer social change, another part of me is, and has always been, very close to the artistic and dreaming realms of experience. Since I was very young, music, theater and dance have played a big role in my life. Ordinary life somehow didn't have the same spark or depth as the songs I would play as a teenager on my guitar behind the door of my room or the rock and folk concerts I would attend. Everyday life didn't have enough of the mysterious, artistic, and musical spirit for which I longed. I wondered if it would be possible to embrace both of these worlds at the same time.

In addition, I think that my passion is spurred on most strongly because art and various forms of imagination and dreaming helped me keep my head above water while trying to survive some of the most painful experiences in my life. I don't know what I would have done without them by my side, to bring comfort, depth, color, sound, and new perspectives to what often seemed intolerable moments.

These artistic mediums also play a central role in my life today. I use various creative modalities in my work with clients and in the work Arny and I do with individuals and groups around the world. Over the last few years I have been involved in writing music, making puppets, and creating various other forms of artwork in order to express and teach some of the concepts of Worldwork and process work. And most importantly, we have witnessed over and over again very moving experiences in group process when the dreaming aspect has been valued and brought to bear on group and collective issues.

So, my interest in writing this article has come a great deal from the struggles and creativity of my own life and our present work in the world. Because I emphasize the dreaming aspect of Worldwork in this article, it may appear rather biased in that direction. And I must admit that this is true! My greatest hope is that all realms of experience are valued and that dreaming is recognized as one of the crucial pathways to deepen and bring greater meaning to group life and to some of the most intractable problems of our world.

Dreaming with the YouTube Debate ...

In any case, after the YouTube debate was over, I went online, watched it again and transcribed it in its entirety. I wanted to use my knowledge of process work to understand the communication structures of the discussion, and most importantly, I wanted to identify the "dreaming" level of experience hidden behind the more surface

conversation. Through these studies and discussions about them with Arny, I realized that if some simple dreaming elements of the debate had been focused upon, they could have potentially enriched and deepened the discussion in new and profound ways. (I will mention some of them below.)

But, before I go further, let me briefly introduce worldwork. Then I will describe my view of why the dreaming aspect of worldwork is not only important but crucial for sustainable group, organizational, community, and political processes.

What Is Worldwork?

Worldwork is that aspect of process work that focuses on small- and large-group work, organizational work, and open city forums. Arny began developing worldwork in Switzerland in the 1980s when he realized that working with individuals and couples was often insufficient to deal with the larger social and community field in which we live. Therefore, he started to explore the way in which process-oriented concepts he had developed until that point for working with individuals, couples, and families, could also be applied to working with small and large groups. Over the years, he has expanded the theory and practice of worldwork. Worldwork has been practiced in many parts of the world and applied to such realms as community building, organizational development, diversity awareness in schools and universities, police training, and severe conflict situations. The practice and philosophy of worldwork combines aspects of many disciplines, including physics, psychology, spiritual traditions, and art. It is a cross-disciplinary approach that, as Arny states, helps to connect “transpersonal experiences with mundane reality, spiritual service and political activity, Eastern selflessness and Western rationalism, dreamwork and bodywork.”²

Worldwork, like all of process work, is based on the idea that the process of each individual, relationship, and group contains its own inherent wisdom. When we use awareness to follow and unfold the unique process of each person or community, that wisdom reveals itself most fully. Therefore, even in the most intractable conflicts, there is a great deal of meaning and wisdom, hidden within what otherwise might seem like intolerable events.

Deep Democracy

Worldwork is based on Arny’s concept of “deep democracy.” Deep democracy is both a philosophy and a method. The philosophy recognizes that every group has a consensual reality (i.e., a set of assumptions, beliefs, and perceptions that is viewed by the majority as real) *as well as* another dreaming reality or dimension that is ordinarily unseen yet lies behind the known consensual reality. This dreaming dimension includes all of the deep feelings and dreams hidden within our more overt communication. Without training, groups tend to focus only upon that with which they identify and consent to as real and will miss other important aspects of communication. The method of deep democracy focuses on the ability of the facilitator to use her or his awareness to notice, value, and follow all of the people and parts of a given group in consensus reality *as well as* noticing and valuing the more dreamlike expressions and feelings of a group. Therefore, deep democracy brings power and attention to us, the people, as in ordinary democracy, and at the same time heightens our power of *awareness* to notice and flow with the various levels of consciousness that arise in communication. Only when all dimensions of reality are recognized and acknowledged does the wisdom of the group emerge.

Three Levels of Awareness

In Deep Democracy there are three levels of awareness. The first is “Consensus Reality” and the second two levels are part of the *dreaming* dimension of community life, called “Dreamland” and the “Essence.”

The **Consensus Reality Level** of worldwork focuses on the concerns, conflicts, and people involved in a particular issue, the history, the facts, the rank differences involved, real social change, etc.

The **Dreamland Level** of worldwork reveals that a group is a bunch of people but it is also a *field* with a particular atmosphere. When we are in a group we can feel the atmosphere; it feels tense, lighthearted, heavy, etc. Within that field we find all of the unexpressed beliefs, feelings, attitudes, moods, and hopes that lie behind our consensual discussions. In addition, the field or atmosphere of a group is filled with various parts or *polarities* that are in relationship or tension with one another. The various positions, parts, and sides of an issue that seem static in consensus reality (that is, belonging to particular individuals and groups) are *roles* in Dreamland that are shared; they belong in some way to *everyone* involved. Therefore, as we enter Dreamland, each side of an issue, each position and feeling, does not only belong to a given individual or group but can be represented by various people. As the roles become more fluid (i.e., not rigidly affixed to particular individuals, groups, etc.), they begin to transform. A good facilitator also notices the way in which people switch roles consciously or unconsciously during any process. By bringing awareness to this shifting of the field, the group process has the chance to deepen and unfold. In addition a facilitator will help to notice *ghost roles*—those people, events, or things that are spoken about in a group but that no one is directly representing. I will say much more about Dreamland below.



Huichol Yarn Painting

The **Essence Level** refers to the deepest, subtlest feelings, visions, and dreams behind any given feeling, role, or part of a group. When someone is able to get down to the essence level, it frequently touches everyone, bringing a sense of oneness that resonates and unifies the group atmosphere, at least for that moment in time. In our most recent work, the deep essence of a group can also be understood and experienced as the common “earth” of a group, the spot on earth with which a group most identifies. Arny calls this the group’s Process Mind.³

The Dreamland and Essence levels are *nonconsensual* realities in the sense that the group has not consented upon their existence, yet the moods and dreams behind these dreaming realms strongly influence the group atmosphere and interaction.⁴

A Revolution in Consciousness

A Worldwork facilitator attempts to follow and bring awareness to the flow of a group’s experience as events move between various levels, issues, and individuals as well as between roles and the deepest feelings involved. By following the natural process of the group, new resolutions, meaning, and awareness arise.

For some of us, the idea that there are various realities might seem strange. However, modern physics tells us about the existence of different realities, that is, the Newtonian and the Quantum realities. Arny compares these realities in physics to the different dimensions of worldwork:

The Dreaming is to everyday reality as the quantum world is to the Newtonian reality. The Dreaming shakes our certainty that life is composed of real people in fixed bodies. To truly understand, appreciate, and even love the community you are working for, you need to sense it not only as a fact composed of real people, but as a Dreaming essence that evolves into the changing roles, timespirits, and people.⁵

Consensus-oriented discussions can be powerful and crucial in the development of practical social action. And the ability to debate with one another is a precious gift of democracy. At the same time, a good facilitator knows that it is important to open up as well to the dreaming aspect of community because, while real outer solutions can be very important, if they repress background (hidden) feelings that are present – that is, those feelings not normally represented during meetings and negotiation, such as greed, hopelessness, fear, desperation, gossip, etc.—whatever solution is reached is likely to be sabotaged or will not hold for long. For example, we know that laws have been passed for equality for women, but the background atmosphere and gender tensions still simmer as they have for centuries. Sustainable resolution involves acknowledgment and fluid interaction with consensual dialogue as well as the dreaming that lies hidden within those conversations.

A Worldwork Example. Some years ago, Arny and I facilitated an open city forum on a particular issue I can't go into here, because of privacy issues. But the process was in some ways simple. People representing the government came together to face community members who were angry about a recent government policy. Shortly after the forum began, the atmosphere became very tense. Community members began to shout about their various complaints at the government and the government officials responded by becoming more and more entrenched in their positions. At one point, Arny and I noticed that one of the government officials was taking a few hesitant steps backwards, while turning slightly towards the door to the outside.

Assuming that these movement signals were a crucial part of the dreaming world that had not yet been brought into the conversation in a conscious manner, and further guessing that this “dreaming” might deepen the overall dialogue process, we asked the official to pause for a moment. “Notice what you are experiencing,” we advised. After pausing, he said that he was too shy, but had to admit that, though he was trying to behave in a manner that seemed “strong”, actually he was feeling afraid. He didn't want to show this fear because he thought that he would appear “weak,” and might lose the confidence of the city. He said that he was passionate about creating a city that was welcoming and supportive to everyone, but that he felt he was failing in his goals.

As soon as he mentioned his fears, the atmosphere transformed. Some community members felt touched by his openness and were very surprised to discover that he was fearful. These people were also pleased to realize that they *themselves* must have been strong enough to have frightened him! One of these people stood up and solemnly spoke to everyone saying, “I realize I have leadership qualities and that I have been too shy to show them before.” She and other community members then proceeded to talk

about their feelings. They each said, in different ways, that they had been spending too much time trying to tell the government that it should be a better leader. Actually, they themselves had the leadership ability they were hoping to find in the government. They said that their first hand knowledge of the problems of the city put them in the unique position of knowing what would actually work best and what could most easily resolve some of the city's "impossible" issues. As these community members switched roles, stepping more fully into what had been the "leadership and government position" they felt their own abilities and said that they wanted to work together with the government to create new alternatives and lasting solutions. The government officials were notably relieved! (We were too.) The fighting atmosphere relaxed as the forum moved further and deeper in the direction of cooperation.

As this example suggests, when we are in groups, there are always dreaming elements—those indeterminable, unseen forces that act upon us. In any organization, there are spirits in the air that play a helpful or deleterious effect on the atmosphere. Therefore, we are moved as much by organizational *structures* as we are by the *dreams* behind groups. Our job is to make those dreams useful for the whole group and for its work in the world. Arny says:

Today, spirits are not the responsibility only of shamans. It is everyone's job to facilitate connections among these spirits of the times and make tensions among the powers useful in the marketplace, in the streets, and of course, at home. We must pay attention to what people say, but if that's all we notice, if we do not approach the spirit of groups – the spirit of love, jealousy, hostility or hope – stalemates and repetitions of world history result. To achieve sustainable peace, we need to break through to a new level of communication.⁶

When we expand our view of "reality", we can understand a community as a concrete group of people with issues, and at the dreaming level, we can understand them as a field filled with many feelings, roles, dreams, and atmospheres. Without awareness of the unknown dreaming of a group, it can confound and confuse conversations and solutions. Arny says, "...it is this dreamlike nature of fields that makes it so difficult for ecologists, economists, and politicians to deal with the world, because it is only partly organized by causal influences. The world is also organized by noncausal influences, by the dreaming field, and we need to be shamans and visionaries as well as politicians and scientists to solve the world's problems."⁷

The worldwork paradigm suggests a *revolution in consciousness*.⁸ This revolution requires that a facilitator or someone in a group is able to acknowledge the group's consented-upon reality and also appreciate and bring in the hidden dreaming dimensions influencing that group. Worldwork emphasizes the flow between and among levels. It does not focus only on one or the other, but notices and assists the flow between them all. It sees all aspects of our awareness as natural and co-existing. A good facilitator can relate consensus reality issues to dreamland and is able to bring dreaming experiences back to consensus reality so that practical and useful outer changes in everyday personal, social, and political life can be made. Worldwork attempts to bring both of these worlds under one large umbrella, revealing that consensus reality and dreaming are two phases on the road of process; two of the levels of experience that arise and can assist one another naturally through the course of community interaction.

The Split between Realities

Of course, keeping consensus reality and dreaming separate can be very important! When we are driving and come to a stop sign, it's probably best to stop the car and follow the signal, rather than dream and do what we please!

But, as mentioned earlier, the historical clash between dreaming-oriented cultures and more scientific or rationally oriented cultures remains a painful, untouched background issue in many nations and communities, with disastrous effects in terms of trauma, loss of land, culture, history, and people. In addition, in some cosmopolitan societies, people who express themselves in dreamier ways often feel inferior to those who express themselves in a more linear, rational fashion. I remember an aboriginal woman in Australia telling us that she had to wear a dunce cap and sit in the corner as punishment for "dreaming" while in school. This mark has stayed with her, her whole life.

The tension between these modalities in group interactions can sometimes create a kind of covert war, aggravating moment-to-moment community interactions. No matter what issue is being focused upon, it is possible that one modality puts the other down subtly and sometimes powerfully. Yet, this conflict is rarely noticed or addressed consciously. For example, an individual who speaks rationally and logically about a given subject can subtly put down others who speak in a more feeling or emotional way. At another time, a particular group whose members express themselves emotionally can put down the style of other groups or individuals who speak in a more linear fashion. Without recognition this conflict can continue unabated and cause a great deal of frustration, pain, or animosity in addition to whatever other issues are being discussed.

The Connection between Realities

It is also important to note that although there is great tension between linear and dreaming modalities, the way in which they *need one another* is also well known. Today, many groups, businesses, and individuals are aware of the significance dreaming plays in the enhancement of everyday life and work. For example, many business people know that in order to generate greater teamwork, brainstorming, and new ideas among employees, it is important to take time to drop out, relax, play games, and have fun. Some researchers and psychologists are exploring the significance of "emotional intelligence" (versus the traditional intelligence measured on IQ tests) as predictive of success, leadership, and good interpersonal relationships.⁹ Many scientists and artists speak about getting to the limit of what they are able to do or understand, then needing to relax and dream to let new and innovative ideas bubble up to the surface. People have always gone to religious or spiritual practices to find something to sustain them in their work, knowing that remaining only in everyday reality is not sufficient to bring meaning to life's events. And most importantly, all good social activists have had some dreamland spiritual experience supporting them in their social change work.¹⁰

Likewise, in individual therapy, the consensual and dreaming realms of experience can be very important. When I work with an individual, I listen to the person's conscious problems and interests and find out about her or his momentary identity in consensus reality. At this level, I can help my client with practical solutions. At the same time I look, listen, and sense those things that arise with which the person does not identify, yet which emerge through his or her words, body signals, or dreams. Army calls these disavowed, unknown aspects of our experience, *dreaming* experiences, because they tend to appear in our dreams.

These dreaming signals can contribute greatly to the understanding of the person's overall process. For example, one of my clients said that she is terrified to give a lecture. Her business requires that she frequently give talks to groups, but she is afraid to do that. She says that when she begins to speak, she tends to become spacey and forget what she is saying. In consensus reality she is competent businesswoman who has to give lectures. In the unknown realm of dreamland, which contains those things with which she does not identify, she is "spacey." While working with her, I asked her if she would explore the feeling of "spaciness" for a couple of minutes. As she did this, she became even foggier and suddenly got in touch with her own deepest feelings about what she would like to say to her audiences. By going into her "spacey" feeling, she could connect more fully with herself and relate her information in a deeper and more impassioned way to her audience. Here we see that shifting momentarily into dreamland can bring new information that is actually enriching to everyday life and work.

In worldwork, dreamlike signals with which a group does not identify exist *at the same time* as the group's consciously intended communication. For example, I remember a man who was very angry about a particular topic and said that he wanted to confront those who put him down. However, at the same time, he was looking at the floor. When he consciously embraced his double signal, he put his head down, paused, and said that he was actually hopeless that anything good could come out of the conversation and had already given up. If this signal was not acknowledged or understood, it would linger in the background and impede any chance that the outer confrontation could complete itself.

These examples show that, in fact, consensus reality and dreaming are not totally separate but are *imbedded within* one another. When the woman above is trying to give a linear lecture, she is simultaneously spacey and unable to speak. When the man above became angry, he was simultaneously hopeless. Years ago, Arny called these double messages *double signals*; two communication signals happening simultaneously. Double signals are quite natural and reveal that the signals with which we identify in consensus reality are often blurred by a second dreaming signal that is simultaneously trying to come to awareness. A good therapist or worldworker will value both parts of the process, try to follow the flow between them as they arise in practice, and use awareness to make both processes as useful as possible for the client's or group's life as a whole.

Here we see that, in fact, to follow an individual or group process fully we *need both* the dreaming and linear approaches. We need our linear minds and awareness to notice dreaming signals in the first place and to help frame, unfold, and make those experiences useful. Without careful and exact rational awareness we might not notice these signals at all!

Before going further, let's consider how important and influential the dreaming realm of experience has been historically to community life.

Ritual and Community Dreaming in History
Artistic and imaginative expression has been used throughout time to convey and navigate community process. Let's briefly consider the



Hopi Women's Dance, Oraibi, Arizona

use of ritual, shamanism, theater, and art as vehicles for social change, for experiencing the dreaming background of community, and for enriching the life of communities as a whole.

In many indigenous communities ceremonial, spiritual, and artistic rituals have helped people gain contact with the gods, goddesses, great forces, and powers moving and influencing community life. In his book *Dance: Ritual of Experience* Jamake Highwater says, "...ritual is a complex, pervasive, and remarkably human process which exists everywhere in history and everywhere on Earth. It gives people an access to the ineffable and it provides them with ways of dealing with forces which seem beyond their comprehension and control."¹¹

Shamans in various traditions have gone into altered states to communicate with spirits, had great visions, and brought back wisdom and guidance for entire communities. Black Elk, a medicine man of the Oglala Sioux Indians, said that it is important to transition into, and then back from, altered states to everyday reality. He said that when someone has a great vision, that person can only use its power and medicine when she or he has actually acted the vision out in front of her or his entire community.¹²

Dreamland art forms such as masks, costumes, dance, music, visual arts, and theater have been used as mediums through which a community can experience and get in contact with the background ghosts, tensions, and healing forces in the atmosphere.

Masks have been used throughout the world as a means of coming to terms with death, of stepping into and embodying gods or spirits, and of passing on and maintaining stories and ancient traditions.¹³ Putting on a mask is an artistic and freeing way of climbing into and expressing the various roles and spirits of a given community. One example is the combined mask dance, drama, and shamanic ritual called *Hahoe Pyeolshingut T'alnori* from Korea. This masked ritual makes fun of the ruling class, attempts to ease difficulties and tensions between the various social classes, and includes shamanic prayers to encourage prosperity and prevent natural disasters.¹⁴



Guatemalan Masks



Korean Hahoe Masks



Zulu Drummers at a Traditional Dance, Valley of 1000 Hills, Kwazulu-Natal South Africa

Music has played a large role in community process and ritual throughout the world. Voice and musical instruments, rhythm and tone have been significant vehicles for healing and shamanic rituals. Sound is even described in some cultural myths as central to the creation of the universe.¹⁵ Music has also been closely linked to social action and change. Consider the innumerable songs stemming from social change movements such as the civil rights movement, anti-war movements, workers rights movements, and many others. Many

benefit concerts created to support certain local and global issues have sprung up around the world. And many musical groups have based their work in great part upon social issues and social change, such as "Sweet



Honey in the Rock,” the female African American acappella singing group founded by Bernice Johnson Reagon. “Sweet Honey” use their voices and percussion instruments “to create a blend of lyrics, movement and narrative that variously relate history, point the finger at injustice, encourage activism, and sing the praises of love. The music speaks out against oppression and exploitation of every kind.”¹⁶

Theater can be a grand and powerful way of artistically bringing social issues to public awareness. Cabaret, folk theater, and particularly political theater -- a means of using drama or performance to bring social and political issues and themes to the public through performance -- are powerful means of artistically addressing social problems and tensions. For example, early Greek drama examined controversial social and political issues in front of an audience seated in an amphitheater. Poet, playwright, and theater director Bertolt Brecht created political theater with the intent to educate the public and encourage the audience “to identify social ills at work in the world and be moved to go forth from the theatre and effect change.”¹⁷ Much like worldwork processes, Brecht described his theater as “a collective political meeting.” He did not see the audience as passive observers but rather as active participants.”¹⁸ Brazilian theater director, politician, and writer Augusto Boal developed the “Theater of the Oppressed” with the idea that theater could be a vehicle for activism at the grass-roots level.¹⁹ Large puppets have been used by the Bread and Puppet Theater to create social commentary in community-based theater performances and celebrations. (In the photo at the beginning of this article and to the right, you see how each role -- in this case each large puppet -- needs many people to operate or fill it.) Psychiatrist, educator, and theorist Jacob Moreno developed psychodrama and sociodrama that linked social issues with theater and therapy.



Our friend and theater director Phelim McDermott and his “Improbable Theater” company often use puppets and other fanciful creatures to express the background spirits and ghosts of a particular situation. When Arny and I were in London recently, we saw the play Phelim directed, *Satyagraha*, by Phillip Glass. The play brought to life Mahatma Gandhi’s years in South Africa where he developed his philosophy of nonviolent protest. We, the audience, were immersed in the feelings and atmosphere of this often heart-wrenching and crucial period in history. Phelim and collaborator Julian Crouch created huge and awesome paper-mache figures that brought the ghost roles of modern moguls and Hindu gods to the stage as they hung ominously in the air above the actors, depicting the background field and ghosts of the situation. It was extremely powerful and gave us an awesome sense of the atmosphere with its forces and ghosts surrounding those historical moments.

Dance has also been used as a means of collective ritual and to gain contact with the great powers of the universe, to deal with community issues, to celebrate and create rituals for the harvest, puberty rites, hunting, and much more. Round dances based on the cycling of seasons and stars have been performed to assist in the revolution of the heavens. The corroboree is a ceremonial meeting in which the Aborigines use



Ayamara Woman Dancing A Traditional Bolivian Dance (Morenada)



Young Native American Dancer

costume, dance, and music to interact with, and pass on information about, “The Dreamtime.”²⁰



Children Doing Chinese Lion Dance



Roi De Soleil, Brazilian
Carnival of Rio de Janeiro

Carnival in many parts of the world provides a refreshing break from consensus reality and a robust vehicle for experiencing and expressing the dreaming background of community life. These collective festive celebrations fill the street atmosphere with the dreaming ghosts and spirits of each particular country or region via costumes, music, floats, and dance. The artistry often combines colors and form with irony or sarcasm to speak about local or world politics and events.



Carnival in Basel

When we lived in Switzerland, the celebration of “Fasnacht” was a yearly event filled with colorful outfits, music, and parades throughout the city.

When I was studying the Mardi Gras of New Orleans, I realized what a powerful example it is of the importance of dreamland in collective life. As a yearly ritual, prepared for many months ahead of time, people don costumes and masks, ride floats, and celebrate as a way to express the spirits in the field -- the agonies, frustration, joy, as well as the undying commemoration of a life well lived. Apparently many folks in New Orleans insisted that Mardi Gras occur after Hurricane Katrina, no matter what happened to them during or after the hurricane. In fact, I read that enthusiasm was *even more intense* than usual as an affirmation of life and a means of healing.²¹ Through mask and costume, many of the political and governmental figures were shown and satirized along with floats saying things like “C’est Levee!” or “Chirac, please buy us back!”



Float In The Krewe Of Chaos
Mardi Gras 2006 Parade Satires
U.S. Army Corps of Engineers

Dreamland’s Atmosphere, Roles, and Ghosts

As we have seen, the dreaming aspect of groups is like a great theater full of masks, feelings, spirits, and stories waiting to come to birth. Let’s take a closer look at some of the details of the dreamland and essence levels of worldwork. Then I will give a lighthearted example followed by a look at some of the many methods that can be used to apply the dreaming dimension in group situations.

To begin with, think of the **atmosphere** of a group. The atmosphere is a subtle or powerful feeling in the air, such as heaviness, lightness, gaiety, or severity. It can feel like cloudy skies or bright sunshine. For me, the atmosphere of a group is like the set design of a theater performance. Surrounding the actual performers, the set design creates a particular feeling, an atmosphere, for example, of foreboding, magic, lightness, dread, complexity, simplicity.

Like a set design, the atmosphere of a community is a kind of backdrop, an all-pervading field, surrounding the group. It is a palpable force that everyone feels but rarely sees or discusses. Yet when we enter any group we feel and sense the field's effects in our bodies. Arny describes the atmosphere like a sea of emotions and powerful, inexplicable forces containing all of the dreamlike, disavowed feelings "that create currents and undertows under the surface."²²

As in theater, the atmosphere is filled with specific characters and stories that make up or create it and the story it surrounds. In consensus reality those figures are represented by very specific people or groups. However, in dreamland, these figures are *roles* that can and are filled by many.

Roles in a group are like masks, puppets, or spirits that represent different sides and feelings of an issue. At one moment one person will enter into a particular role, and at another moment someone else will find him- or herself in that position. All of us are too multifaceted to be in any one role all the time. In a family, for example, the kids often want to be seen as "older and wise" and the parents often want and need to be "children."



Carved Poles Tiwi Island

Roles are like magnets in a magnetic field that draw people in to fill them. For example, if a person who is experienced as very disturbing to a group leaves, at another point someone else --either within the group or a newcomer to the group -- will begin to act in a similar manner as that "disturbing" role. Similarly, in everyday life, we often find ourselves pulled into one role or another in a given circumstance, even though we do not ordinarily identify with that position. For example, if you go into a room where everyone is feeling very free and open, it is possible that you might become polarized and begin to feel a bit more inhibited, even if you weren't feeling that way before! In other words, each of us is moved about by various roles in a field but usually don't realize it. Augusto Boal talks about this influence in terms of actors who know they are acting roles, and everyday people who are pulled into roles:

Everything that actors do, we do throughout our lives, always and everywhere. Actors talk, move, dress to suit the setting, express ideas, reveal passions—just as we do in our everyday lives. The only difference is that actors are conscious that they are using the language of theatre, and are thus better able to turn it to their advantage, whereas the woman and man in the street do not know that they are speaking theatre."²³

One of the advantages of literally playing out the various roles in front of a group is that the whole group can see the roles and the way they interact and can ponder the overall situation. We have often seen that a role play helps people to think and feel more deeply about the issues; consider aspects of the issues that they might not have known or thought about previously. Boal speaks of this as well when he says that "...engaging in performance can bring forward questions, experiences and issues that are difficult to express initially in words. It can reveal elements for the group to work on."²⁴ Role play, in this sense, serves a similar purpose as theater, allowing all the dreaming and background spirits to come to life so that the group can begin to become aware of its atmosphere and the parts that create it.

Also, when we see roles enacted it becomes apparent that the feelings that each person holds individually are not only personal but belong to the feelings of others in the field as well. That is, whatever you are feeling in a group is an expression of a role that others in the group also experience. For example, if you feel shy in a group, it is helpful to ask yourself, what role am I playing in this group and how does this role belong not only to me but possibly to others as well? The chances are that there are others who feel shy as well. And if you become aware of the “rolehood” of what you are feeling, you might ask yourself, what other role might exist in the group that is making me feel shy? The other role might be someone who is overbearing and powerful. This powerful role may or may not be coming out overtly in the group but probably exists in some form in the group atmosphere.

As we take various roles consciously, we can help process the field more fully. Roles that seemed to be set in stone begin to transform and the whole process can unfold more fluidly.²⁵

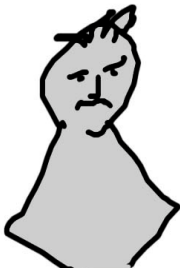
Role Switching. During any particular group process, our feelings shift from one role to another. So we also speak of **role switching**. Role switching is not simply a method to be applied; it is something that happens spontaneously inside of each of us, consciously or unconsciously. While I am in a very stern role accusing others of not being serious enough, I might suddenly have the feeling that I do not want to be serious anymore but would actually like to feel more lighthearted. In that moment, I have inadvertently switched sides. A good facilitator can help this role switching to occur and thereby nudge the group field into becoming more fluid and deeper.

Speaking of playfulness, a terrific example of role switching can be found on a YouTube video between the muppet puppets Kermit the Frog and Elmo! See <http://youtube.com/watch?v=aMDhnCTst-k>. There you will see Kermit trying to teach Elmo about the difference between being loud and being quiet. Kermit says that there are loud ways to be and quiet ways to be. Elmo interrupts him over and over by jumping up and down and talking loudly with excitement. Kermit gets so frustrated with Elmo that he starts to *yell at Elmo to be quiet!* Kermit switched roles! He is inadvertently in the *loud role* but doesn't know it! This happens all the time, even with humans! ☺

Ghost Roles. One more element of dreamland is what we call ghost roles, those roles people speak about but no one represents directly. The photo at the beginning of this article of Satyagraha shows beautifully the way in which ghost roles hover over and around the atmosphere and people involved. How do ghost roles show up in group process? Ghost roles appear each time we talk about a *third party* that is not in the room, someone or something that no one is representing in the moment. Gossip is a great place to listen for third parties. Just think of the last time you were with a bunch of friends and talked about the “others” who are so boring, different, wild, or whatever. Those “others” are ghost roles in your conversation. If someone is able to speak as if they were that ghost role, it can be very helpful and enriching to the conversation. Ghost roles can refer to people as well as things in the environment, such as dying trees or hurricanes. In issues surrounding war, the “dead” are often a ghost role. In some of our group processes, when people have spoken for the dead, in their imaginations, they have talked about their relief at being free from tension. And they have given helpful advice to the living about how to minimize the tendency toward increasing war and conflict.

Example with Masks:

Before going further into various methods of working with the dreaming in group process, I would like to give one more example to explain some of the above ideas. This is a lighthearted example that uses the art of masks and dreaming to hopefully explain roles, role switching, and ghost roles a bit more vividly. Consider this scenario.

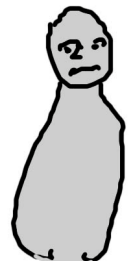


Boss

A mental health organization is not meeting the needs of its many clients. The clients are seeking help but the organization is not able to keep up with the large demand for services. There is a meeting between the boss and the teamworkers. The atmosphere feels tense. The boss and teamworkers disagree about what is needed in the organization.

Imagine two real people in this dialogue. First, the *boss*. The boss feels that the solution to the problem is that the workers need more structure and discipline in order to provide more help to their clients. She says that the workers do not show up on time and do not do their jobs efficiently. If they would be more disciplined, they would be able to help even more clients.

Another real person at the meeting is part of the staff, a mental health teamworker. He says that he feels that the solution to the problem would be for the teamworkers to have more feeling when they interact with their clients. He feels that, due to time pressures, the workers act too much like machines when they interact with their clients and therefore do not meet clients' needs sufficiently. More feeling could help.



Teamworker

Before going further, consider the possibility that while each of these individuals is *real* in consensus reality, they also represent two Dreamland roles in this tense field. The roles they are representing do not only belong to them but to everyone in the organization. I like to describe roles as if they were masks which anyone can wear.



Boss and Teamworker Roles

The group decides to explore the process in Dreamland. The boss and one of the teamworkers get up to represent these roles. Here I show them standing behind masks that represent those roles. The boss stands behind a red mask that represents the role of the one who feels that more discipline is needed. The teamworker stands behind a yellow mask that represents the role of those who feel that more feeling is needed in the organization.



Boss and Teamworkers Representing Roles

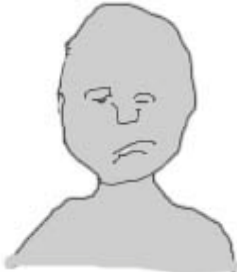
After much discussion between these roles, the real boss suddenly feels that she actually would like more feeling. A role switch has occurred. A good facilitator would notice this role switch and suggest that the boss literally switch roles and go over to the other side, to the yellow mask. At the same time, the teamworker begins to see the validity of needing more structure and switches roles, and now stands behind the red mask. *The roles remain the same but the people*



Role Switching

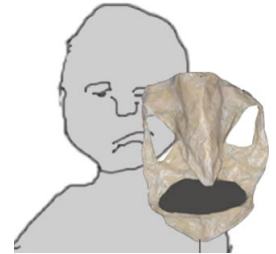
move between them, depending upon their momentary feelings. (Of course, this doesn't have to be done with masks, but it's fun to study like this!)

Let's go one step further. The two sides have been discussing the "suffering client" who needs help.



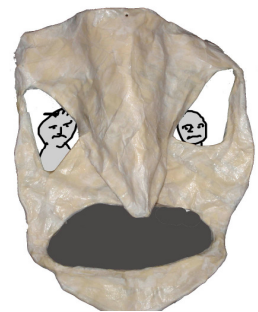
Client

This "suffering and needy client" is a *ghost role* in the conversation, a figure that is mentioned but not directly represented as yet by anyone in the field. Therefore, the client is "real" in consensus reality and is also a ghost role. Here is a picture of the client and the ghost mask role.



Client as a Ghost Role

The facilitator asks if anyone in the group can represent that suffering and needy "client." At that point, the (original) boss steps into the ghost role and begins to speak as the client who needs help. However, while speaking as this ghost role, the boss suddenly realizes that *she herself* actually is that ghost role in the sense of needing help herself. She is exhausted and feels she does not get enough support and is very shy to say so. In other words, she *is* that "client" in the sense of needing to speak about her own suffering.



Boss and Teamworker Speaking as The "Client" Ghost Role

At that point, the teamworker also stands behind the ghost role and says that he also feels tired and is preoccupied with difficult personal problems that he is shy to speak about in the group.

While the outer issue is real and important, both of these people realize that they have been projecting some of their own pain onto the "client." They have been shy to speak about their own suffering. All of these feelings have gone into the "atmosphere," so to speak, and have put additional pressure on everyone. Everyone realized that the needy "client" is not only outside but is also a role inside each person in the organization and needs to be heard as well.

By occupying the ghost role, the boss and the teamworker feel more connected and the atmosphere begins to ease. They begin to feel that they can understand and work better with one another and can care for each other more. A sense of commonality and connection has occurred that was not consciously experienced previously. At the same time, they are able to understand their real clients more deeply and new solutions can arise.

While this would be enough, a good facilitator can also ask the individuals to get to the *essence* or deepest message behind any particular role or feeling. In this case, the boss goes further and says that she came to work in this organization because of a great dream that moved her to be of help to people and also to heal some of her own wounds. In fact, it is because of her own suffering that she was led to do this type of work. This revelation resonates with others in the group, deepens their sense of common purpose for their organization, and provides a deeper basis from which to reevaluate their work.

There are many more useful methods for working in dreamland that are too numerous to mention here. Let me simply mention there are methods such as noticing *double signals*, staying at *hot spots* (when something intense happens and is overlooked), or pausing at a *cool spot* (when momentary resolutions occur), noticing communication *edges* (when someone speaks and can't complete what he or she is saying) and more. See the literature for more explanation about these methods.²⁶

Ghosts in the Debate

Let's consider the idea of ghost roles in terms of the YouTube debate. When I reread the transcript, I realized that one of the biggest ghosts that was spoken about was the "bad Bush administration" that pushes others around and "big business" that only looks out for itself.

While there are actual reasons for speaking about the bad practices of the administration and business, it is also helpful to consider that the ghosts might be present in the moment at another level of the conversation. Each person will have her or his own way of representing the ghost. After discussing this with Army, we thought that one possibility might be for a person to say something like: "I notice that I would like to say that the one who pushes others around isn't only on the outside, that I too can sometimes be like this administration when I don't pay attention to feedback and simply push people around because of what I feel is best. I am like big business when I stand only for my way and don't want to listen to others. You have to watch me. Only with all of our awareness together can we notice these things and make changes. I don't want to just give up my power, I want to use it consciously and interact with you about it. So, let me now stand for what I think and then we can discuss it together."

It is also helpful to discover how ghost roles are not only "outside" but may be present in the moment at another level of communication. For example, in the debate, the candidates were asked whether or not they would meet with hostile leaders in the first year of their presidency without preconditions. The debate became heated between the two candidates, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama. Obama answered that he would meet with such leaders; that it did no good to alienate anyone from dialogue. Clinton, on the other hand, said that she would not meet without preconditions; she said that it would be naïve and subject her to potential propaganda.

A process-oriented listener would notice that, in consensus reality, both have very real and possibly reasonable points behind their arguments. However, if you listen closely you would notice a ghost role in their discussion, "the hostile leader." Dreamland theory tells us that ghost roles in conversations are also present somehow in the communication signals of the individuals involved. In the debate, the "hostile leader" role appeared in the moment in the "hostile" nature of their comments about one another. Army suggested that a political leader (or anyone in this situation, for that matter) who recognizes this ghost in her or his behavior might say: "I notice that while I am speaking about others who are hostile, and while I have good intentions and want to make a point, I am also becoming hostile toward you. I don't mean to do that, but perhaps I can pick that up consciously and say it directly and then we can debate about it with one another. I also know that that is only a part of me. I am not only hostile; I have many other feelings as well. Perhaps we can make a change now in the way that we talk with one another and not only wait until the future to deal with problems around hostility and leadership."²⁷

Ways to Step into Dreamland and the Essence



The way in which a group enters into the dreaming realms is a matter of the facilitator's metaskills (feeling attitudes)²⁸ and the style and culture of a particular group. Some groups tend toward a more linear style of communicating, whereas others have a more nonlinear style. Shifting into dreamland can be very subtle in the sense of remaining close to a group's consensus reality, or it can be more overt by using role playing, movement, dance, music, or other creative modalities. Let me just mention a few methods here.

Using the Primary Communication Style to Discuss Dreamland Roles

If group members are shy or lean heavily toward dialogue and rational discussion, it can be helpful not to alter their level of consciousness much, but instead to *use their primary way of communicating to think about and discuss* the momentary atmosphere, roles that have been mentioned, and the ghost roles. (The examples I gave for the YouTube debate follow along these lines.) When we work with such groups, we rarely use any special worldwork terminology, but rather talk in more general ways about such terms as roles and ghost roles. For example, instead of saying that someone who does not show up for work is a ghost role, we might simply ask if there are others who would like to stay home for some reason. The group can then ponder how to integrate these dreamlike experiences into its teamwork. Another group whose members are very shy or quiet might write their thoughts down on paper and hand them to the facilitator to read.

Acting Out Roles and Ghost Roles

For some groups it can be very helpful to literally act out the roles and ghosts in the atmosphere. This can be done in a more limited or more expansive way depending upon the style of each group. If the group is shy, the facilitator might act out the various roles and ghosts and ask participants to think about what they have seen, how they might identify with each role, and about various strategies for dealing with the conflict.

Other groups will want to shift levels more and literally get up, take positions in the room, and act out the various roles. The facilitator can ask people to get up and represent one or another role. Others can take the other side(s). Standing and moving around to the various roles is a big transition, yet when people move about and fill various roles they bring the field to life, experience the roles more fully, and help the process unfold more fluidly. The facilitator can help by noticing when role switching happens, remark about edges that are reached, and notice hot or cool spots in the interaction. Those who are watching can experience the various roles and follow their own feelings as the process unfolds, step into any role, perhaps add new roles, or simply ponder what they have seen enacted.

Artistic and Imaginative Expression

Because in the dreaming realm, every mood, every tension, every group, every role and atmosphere, every relationship mess is potential art trying to express itself, we can use artistic forms to bring them to life. In so doing, we become shamans who step into and through the known world and bring back new information for our everyday lives and communities.

A group that is open to such exploration can use all sorts of creative modalities to express the background field of its community life. In recent



Arny and Amy Using Puppets To Express Roles

worldwork training seminars we have expressed the field and roles in terms of music and dance, art, masks, puppetry, and theater. This type of theatrical expression can then be altered, adjusted, and transformed by all involved.

In one seminar in which we explored artistic aspects of group process, some of the participants grabbed the life-size puppets that I had made to demonstrate various theoretical concepts and used them to express the roles of the group process. I felt very much at home, and it helped the group process to deepen!

We have also experimented with nonverbal processes in which the various feelings and roles in the group were expressed through movement and dance. This was especially relieving after a great deal of talk and brought out many people who previously were not comfortable speaking but could then express themselves more fully in nonverbal ways. At other times, people have experimented with putting big sheets of paper on the walls and spontaneously painting their impressions of the field as the group process progressed.

Many theatrical forms, such as Playback Theater,²⁹ used in conjunction with worldwork methods can help bring out the various roles and deepen the group experience. There are many more artistic methods that can and will be developed by various individuals and groups to express, explore, and unfold group processes.

Getting to the Essence through Acting, Movement, and Sound

Whatever method or methods are used, a group is able to go even deeper into the dreaming dimension if the facilitator or someone in the group is able to notice and assist the unfolding of the essence level of experience. Getting to the essence can be as simple as asking someone about the very core of what he or she is trying to express. What is the very essence of what they would like to say? Usually the person begins to express or speak about their deepest feelings, longings, dreams, hopes, or visions that are motivating him or her to speak. If the person who is speaking is shy, the facilitator might “guess into” the essence behind what the person is saying and ask if his or her interpretation is correct.

A very gifted individual can shapeshift into the deepest expression of a feeling or given role and bring that essence out in such a way that it touches everyone. Great actors are gifted in this area. When you see someone on stage getting to the very essence of an experience, it sends ripples of knowing and feeling throughout the audience. Likewise in group process, when someone gets to the essence of a feeling or a role, it can sometimes bring momentary relief to a very polarized situation.

For example, think of a woman who wanted to stop someone else from being angry. She wanted to be kind to the angry person on the other side of the issue and calm her down, but the first woman’s efforts only served to infuriate the other woman further. The first woman went deeper into herself, to her essence, and then hit her chest and said “I’m in pain, it hurts, I feel the hurt” and began to cry and then reached out to the other woman. She did this in such a poignant way that the two grabbed hands. The woman who was originally angry finally felt understood and heard. She said that otherwise she felt that people just wanted her to change without really trying to understand her. Both women sunk to the ground in a kind of common ground of suffering and acknowledgment.

I also remember a seminar we did in Oakland California, during the 1992 riots following the acquittal of the policemen whose beating of Rodney King had been seen around the world. The extreme tension and almost violent conflict between the black and white participants escalated to the point that the police began to shift around nervously in the room. At some point, at the height of the tension, an African American man standing in the corner began to plead: "Accept our rage, accept our anger, but don't forget to love. This is not black pain or white pain. This is our pain. This is my pain. As long as anyone is hurting, I am hurting." And at that moment he began to wail so loud, with such great feeling and agony, and for such a long time, that the people who were arguing stopped transfixed. One by one, every group member turned and slowly moved toward that man, and each began to wail as well. Everyone was wailing, singing. That man brought us to the essence level, the deep feelings that were within the conflict. After much time and great feeling and connection, the group was able to go back to the original conflicts and deal with them in a way that also held this deep and common feeling in the background.³⁰

Acting, movement, dance, sound, and music are also special modalities with which **to get in touch with the essence** of any particular feeling or role in a group. For example, when someone is able to find the essence of a particular role and express it in a basic gesture or movement, this can have a poignant effect on the participants. The essence might be expressed, for example, in an expansive gesture of freedom with the arms and legs, or a heart-wrenching collapse on the floor.

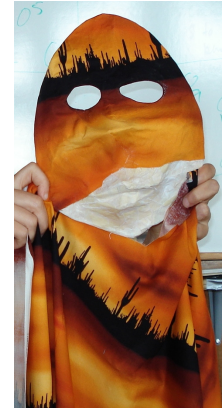
As seen in the example above from Oakland, sound can be a very powerful way to get to the essence. And indeed, music has often been used to express the very essence of groups and nations. National anthems of various countries express a deep hope or dream in the background of a given country. Think, for example, of the song "America the Beautiful." The song speaks about the beauty of the land. Though not everyone is in favor of the United States, this song came originally from a great vision and dream about the earth. It was written by a female teacher in 1893, after traveling by wagon and mule with other teachers to top of the 14,000- foot Pikes Peak Mountain in Colorado. When she saw the incredible view and expanse she wrote: "Oh beautiful for spacious skies, for amber waves of grain, for purple mountain majesties, above the fruited plain! America, America ..."

During one seminar, we experimented with feeling the rhythm and tone of a particular role and then expressing that quality in sound and song. The music helped to express even more fully and with rich depth the deepest feelings behind a role. By doing so, many people felt they could sense the heart or essence of that particular polarity much more fully.

In one of my classes we experimented in another way with sound. Each person "tuned into" the atmosphere of the group and then made sounds to express his or her experience of that atmosphere. As each person added his or her own sounds, a "sound choir" developed. The choir transformed as each person made sound, listened to the others, and began to improvise with one another. Afterwards, we were able to discuss the various sounds we made, the spirits or roles that that sound expressed, and what we learned about ourselves from the way in which the sounds played off of, and merged with, one another.

Getting to the Essence through the Earth

Another way to get to the essence of a group arises out of Arny's most recent research. It has to do with getting in contact with the deepest part of a group and associating it with a special location on the earth. Arny calls that earth spot, the group's *process mind*. In the future he will describe this concept in much greater detail. However, here is a hint. Each participant takes time to feel the essence of the group and find and explore the associated group's earth spot through movement, sound, and inner work. Each person then uses that special earth-based feeling that comes from that spot as a metaskill to help facilitate and flow with the group's process. In other words, when we are in touch with the earth and process mind of a group, it is as if we are wearing a mask of the group's deepest earth and use that to facilitate interactions.



**My Process Mind
Earth Mask**

In a recent seminar we asked small groups of six people to explore the process mind of their groups through movement and sound. Then, staying in touch with their process minds, the groups improvised together purely through movement and sound, until they developed a kind of earth-dance. The group then took time to discuss how these dances gave them new information about their worldwork projects. After that, we created a mini "Mardi Gras" parade in which each small group did a three-minute skit, showing the final dance and messages that came out of their experiences. Most of the people in each group did not know each other and yet we were all astounded at the way in which the connection with the earth made it possible to come up with extremely original, creative, and artistic skits in a very short time.

There is much more to be explored in the areas of movement and dance, theater, music, puppetry, and other nonverbal forms of communication in worldwork. I hope that others will continue to develop and explore new and creative group process modalities.

The Dreaming Child in Each of Us: The Freedom to Dream

Worldwork is a new paradigm that asks that we open up to all aspects of awareness in group life. It says that only when all people and all levels of experience are valued, does the full wisdom of a group reveal itself. Dreaming is one aspect of group process that can help to deepen and enrich group interaction and social action.



A real revolution in consciousness, as Arny has said previously,³¹ would be *the freedom to dream*; to embrace the consensual parts of ourselves and our communities as well as open up to the vast dreaming that lies within and around us. Without access to the dreaming level of experience, we tend to continue the history of marginalizing those individual and cultures that value dreaming, as well as those parts of each of us that dream in the day and every night when we go to sleep.

In all cultures and in all times, the first and foremost dreamers are children. Kids easily express the field through playing with toys and animals, making up stories, dancing, singing, drawing, and simply being curious. It is only when we get a bit older that the dreaming parts of our natures are often seen as debased or too "childish." Interestingly, the "child" is often a ghost role in group process. In communities around the globe,

people speak about the kind of world they hope to leave to their “children.” The children are real and also, in that moment, the children are ghost roles for the group. Who can play those children? Who can bring a child’s mind to bear on the crucial, difficult, and complex issues of our times? Each of us is a child at heart with the ability to playfully explore life with an open, dreaming mind in which new possibilities can occur.

So, is it childlike to switch realities and begin to act out roles? Yes, for the adult side of us. And no, it is simply an expression of the freedom and right of each of us to dream.



Picture Credits

The Bread and Puppet Theater’s annual domestic resurrection circus in Glover Vermont mid 1980s by Max Wantman, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:Bread_and_Puppet_Circus.jpg

Huichol yarn painting by Rojelio Beuites

http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Huichol_yarn_painting_by_Rojelio_Beuites.jpg

Hopi Women’s Dance Oraibi, Ariz. Photographed by John K. Hillers, 1879

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:HopiWomensDance.1879.ws.jpg>

Guatemalan Masks <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Guatemala-Mask.jpg>

Hahoe tal (hahoe mask) sold at Hahoe Folk Village in Andong, Gyeongsangbuk-do, South Korea,

<http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Korea-Andong-Hahoe.Village-04.jpg>

Zulu drummers at a traditional dance Valley of 1000 Hills Kwazulu-Natal South Africa

http://www.istockphoto.com/file_closeup/music/musical_instruments/drums/2392985_zulu_dancers.php?id=2392985

Ayamara woman dancing a traditional bolivian dance (morenada)

http://www.istockphoto.com/file_closeup/recreation/dance/national_and_ethnic_dance/3378602_dancing.php?id=3378602

Young Native American Dancer,

http://www.istockphoto.com/file_closeup/people_specific_attributes/age/teenagers/839473_youth_native_dancer.php?id=839473

Children Doing Chinese Lion Dance,

http://www.istockphoto.com/file_closeup/arts/art_styles/chinese_art/3036219_children_play_lion_dancing.php?id=3036219

Roi de Soleil: Mask of "Le Roi Soleil", the french king Louis XIV represented in the Brazilian carnival of Rio de Janeiro

http://www.istockphoto.com/file_search.php?action=Browse&Cache=&page=4

Carnival in Basel, Switzerland, photo by Flups, <http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/Image:Basler-fasnacht.jpg>.

A Mardi Gras 2006 Float in the Krewe of Chaos Mardi Gras parade satires U.S. Army Corps of Engineers poorly designed floodwalls by Infrogmation

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Image:ChaosCheifEngineer100Hades.jpg>

Carved Poles Tiwi Island, from Tourism NT, <http://www.travelnt.com>

Footnotes

¹ For much more on Worldwork, see Army's *The Year One*, Penguin/Arkana, New York, 1990; *The Leader as Martial Artist*, HarperCollins, San Francisco, 1992; *Sitting in the Fire*, Lao Tse Press, Portland, OR, 1992; and *The Deep Democracy of Open Forums*, Hampton Roads Pub., Charlottesville, 2002.

² *The Leader as Martial Artist*, p.6.

³ Forthcoming book, *The Process Mind*.

⁴ I was interested to see that the three levels of deep democracy are echoed in the understanding of the "kachina" of the Pueblo tribes described by Jamake Highwater in his book *Dance: Ritual of Experience*, 3rd ed.. Oxford University Press, New York, 1996, p.17. Highwater describes the kachina as an ineffable and cosmic force which exists "in three different forms". The first is parallel to the essence realm in terms of being "unseen and unimaginable". The second is like dreamland in the sense of being "the reflection of the kachina power in a human "impersonator" or dancer" and the third is like consensus reality, "the doll which is untouched by the power of the kachina but duplicates its appearance."

⁵ *The Deep Democracy of Open Forums*, p. 117.

⁶ *Sitting in the Fire*, p. 23.

⁷ *Leader as Martial Artist*, p. 16.

⁸ See *Sitting in the Fire*, p. 225, on his idea of deep democracy as an awareness revolution.

⁹ The concept of emotional intelligence was popularized by Daniel Goleman in his book *Emotional Intelligence*, Bantam Books, New York, 1995. An article on the importance of emotional intelligence in business performance and leadership can be found at <http://www.ceoforum.com.au/article-detail.cfm?cid=6226>.

¹⁰ For example, a vision about peace for all nations was behind the work of the founder of the Iroquois confederacy (who was sometimes called "The Great Peacemaker").

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Great_Peacemaker.

¹¹ *Dance: Ritual of Experience*, p.14.

<http://www.firstpeople.us/FP-Html-Wisdom/BlackElk.html>.

¹³ Masks were at one time thought to be used only in certain cultures, but have apparently been used throughout the world. The earliest mask found is Sumerian and is 5,000 years old.

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mask>.

¹⁴ <http://www.lifeinkorea.com/Travel2/nkyongsang/69>

¹⁵ *Larousse Encyclopedia of Music*, Ed. Geoffrey Hindley, Chartwell Books Inc, Secaucus, New Jersey, 1976, p. 17.

¹⁶ <http://www.sweethoney.com/>.

¹⁷ From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bertolt_Brecht.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ <http://www.ptoweb.org/about/boal.php>.

²⁰ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Corroborree>.

²¹ <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/02/26/AR2006022601295.html> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Orleans_Mardi_Gras.

²² *The Leader as Martial Artist*, pp. 13-14.

²³ Augusto Boal, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, Routledge, London, 1992, p. xxx., found at <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-coal.htm>.

²⁴ From <http://www.infed.org/thinkers/et-boal.htm>.

²⁵ Bertolt Brecht hoped to reveal this to audience members at a theater performance. "By highlighting the constructed nature of the theatrical event, Brecht hoped to communicate that the audience's reality was, in fact a construction and, as such, was changeable." From http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bertolt_Brecht

²⁶ For more description of worldwork methods, see our website (<http://www.aamindell.net/worldwork-terms.htm>), Army's books mentioned in footnote 1, and, for example, Gary Reiss's *Changing Ourselves*,

Changing the World, New Falcon Press, Tempe, Arizona, 2000; Ingrid Schuitevoerder's dissertation *Process-Oriented Dialogue: An Inquiry into Group Work and Conflict Facilitation*, University of Sydney-Hawkesbury, November 2000; Stanford Siver's dissertation *Process Work and the Facilitation of Conflict*, Union Institute and University, Cincinnati, 2007; and Max Schupbach's article *Eine Einfuehrung in das prozessorientierte Change Management*, Organisations Entwicklung, Nr.4/2007, pp. 56-64.

²⁷ After this debate there was a series of tense and biting comments that each candidate made about the other.

²⁸ See my *Metaskills: The Spiritual Art of Therapy*, New Falcon Press, Tempe, Arizona, 1995 and Lao Tse Press, Portland, Oregon, 2003.

²⁹ <http://www.playbacknet.org/>.

³⁰ Written about in the *San Francisco Chronicle*, in an article entitled "Mediators Target Hot Spots," May 1, 1992, pp. B3 and B6.

³¹ *Sitting in the Fire*, Chapter 16.