

THE EVOLUTION and 3 BRANCHES OF PROCESS THEORY

(3rd edition)

Amy Mindell, 2016



A note about this 3rd edition

When I wrote the first version of this paper in 2002, it dawned on me that the process theory I had previously learned, and which has been so helpful to me and the many Process Work students and practitioners around the world, was in the midst of expansion. Even though I knew in my heart that the foundations of its theory and practice are always in flux and growth (just like the concept of process itself), my linear mind held fast to what I had learned. I assumed that the theory which my partner and husband, Arny Mindell, developed would stay as it always had been! In that first version, I summarized some of his earliest theoretical ideas beginning in the late 1970s as well as newer developments that had occurred up to 2002. In my mind, all of this formed the first branch of process theory.

In 2007, when I decided to update the original edition, I was astonished to realize that the material in the first paper was a base upon which newer directions had begun to grow. These new ideas had begun to emerge in the late 1990s, when Arny began to extend Process Work into the realm of sentient and subtle experiences. This extension brought even greater

dimensionality to process theory and culminated in Arny's concepts of "Deep Democracy" and the "Intentional Field." At that time, I understood this to be a new and second branch of the theory.

Today I realize once again that, between 2007 and the present day, process theory has continued to expand its boundaries. Arny's studies led him to follow the roots of Process Work even more deeply into the earth. This exploration culminated in his ideas of "Earth-Based Psychology" and the "Process Mind." These concepts remind us that our individual and collective lives and psychologies are not separate, but rather intimately connected to the planet on which we live. And upon further exploration, Arny broadened the theory beyond the boundaries of the earth, to remind us that we are not only citizens of our planet, but also part of the larger universe surrounding us. This was the beginning of his concept of "Spacetime Dreaming." For me, these newest developments formed a third branch of Process Work theory.

In this 3rd edition, I write about the development of process theory through the lens of these three branches. Much of what I have written stems from my own studies and the way Arny and I have taught many of these concepts in our seminars around the world over the years. I attempt to show how the concepts build upon one another and how each expansion further illuminates the beauty and magic of "process."

The purpose of this paper is to give an overview, as I see it, of some of the central elements of process theory. I attempt to map out and bring insight to some of its key concepts and branches. My dreaming life and intense fascination with these ideas propelled me to write down many details with the hope of coalescing the years of development into a concise paper.

What you will find here is not an exhaustive summary of all of Process Work theory, and I do not go into detail about any specific applications. The many Process Workers who have used, taught, and expanded on these ideas throughout the world will certainly adapt, add, and change what I have written in terms of their own understanding. There are also numerous books, articles, and dissertations by Process Work students and practitioners that focus on specific concepts and creative applications of the work.¹

I think this article will be especially interesting to teachers and students of Process Work who would like a summary of some of its concepts and development. However, I imagine it may also be of interest to people who are new to Process Work and seeking a broad overview of its fundamental ideas.

Finally, I am aware that this will probably not be the last “update” of this paper, since inherent in the very idea of “process” is flow and constant change. Process Work itself is always in flux, adapting and expanding to our ever-changing world.

—Amy Mindell
August, 2016

THE EVOLUTION OF PROCESS THEORY
and its 3 BRANCHES
(3rd Version)

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**Beginnings:
PROCESS AND FOLLOWING NATURE**



In my mind, there have been at least three branches in the development of process theory up to the present day. In actuality, the essence of all branches has been present or implicit within one another throughout Process Work's history. However, for the sake of clarity, I will outline them as three distinct branches all stemming from one central trunk. The ideas have been developed by my partner and husband, Arny Mindell, over many years. They have been applied, taught, and amplified in our seminars and classes as well as by many Process Work teachers and students, and in the thirty schools of Process Work around the world.

Before talking about each branch, let me begin with the tree's trunk!

When Arny began to develop Process Work in the late 1970's, the most fundamental, guiding principle (its trunk) had to do with the very idea of **process**. Although we tend to focus on the static names for experiences, Arny also observed that what seem like **static states** are actually the beginnings of *processes* in the midst of change and transformation. His studies of the Chinese Taoist philosophy and belief in the constant flow of nature became fundamental to Process Work's theory.

A process worker uses her or his **awareness** to notice and try to follow the flow of nature and assist in its unfolding.²

So, the ideas of *process—following nature* and *awareness*—are the basis, or trunk, of the process theory tree.

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The First Branch: DREAMBODY, SIGNALS, and LEVELS



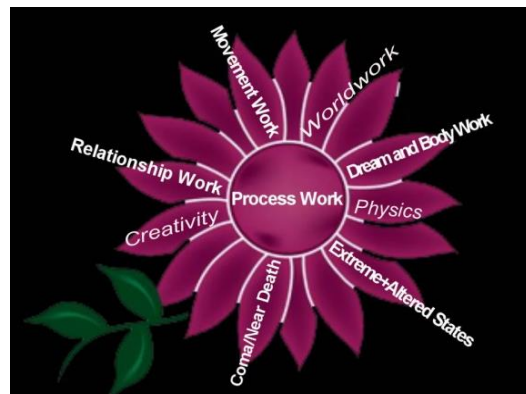
Now let's take a look at the first branch of Process Work's theory.

The Dreambody

In the 1970s, Arny discovered the idea of the **Dreambody**,³ which is the way that dreams and body experiences mirror one another. Through empirical observation, Arny noticed the way in which people's subjective experience of their body symptoms mirrored nighttime images in their dreams; hence the term, *Dreambody*. For example, if I have a pounding feeling in my chest area, I might dream of someone drumming.

Wisdom from Experience: Early Applications

A central idea that arose from the *Dreambody* and other empirical



Some Early Applications of Process Work

observations is that within our experiences, even difficult body symptoms, relationship troubles, or group conflicts, lies a great deal of wisdom, and this wisdom can be accessed if we are able to *unfold* our experiences with awareness. This understanding gave rise to many of its original applications, such as inner work, dream and body work, relationship work, movement work, working with people in extreme and altered states of consciousness, working with those in coma or near death, and the areas of physics, creativity, and more.

Arny then realized that although individual, couple, and family therapy methods can be very helpful, they are not sufficient to deal with the larger social and community fields in which we all live, particularly when there is social, political, or cultural turmoil. Therefore, he developed **Worldwork**,⁴ an approach to working with groups, organizations, open city forums, international conflicts, politics, and such issues as finance, race, gender, sexual orientation, health, and many more social issues.

Signals, Channels, Primary and Secondary Processes

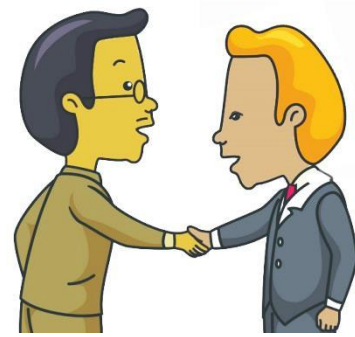
From its inception, process theory with its many applications has involved the observation and study of **signals, sensory-grounded channels, primary and secondary processes, double signals, edges**, and methods such as **amplification** and **unfolding**.⁵

Arny noticed and began to study **signals**, which are bits of information that we convey, such as body movements and gestures, images that we see, sounds that we hear, feelings in our bodies, etc.

These signals:

- *persist*
- *tend to repeat*
- *can be formulated in words*
- are **dualistic**, meaning they are parts in relationship to other parts and polarities
- are **channel-oriented**, meaning they are experienced through various **sensory-grounded channels** such as the auditory, visual, proprioceptive (body feeling), kinesthetic (movement), relationship, and world channels
- *are closer to, or further away from, our momentary identity*. Those signals closer to our identity are connected with our **primary process** or momentary identity. Those that are further away from our identity and are unintentional are connected with our **secondary process**.

The additional concept of the **edge** refers to the boundary between primary and secondary processes and signals.



Consensual and Non-Consensual Signals

There are a number of ways we can understand and differentiate signals. One way is to discern if they are **consensual** or **non-consensual**.⁶

Consensual signals can be observed or spoken about. They can be captured on a video or measured in a doctor's office, and most people will agree or consent to the reality of their existence. They are "real," so to speak, *according to a given culture*. Body gestures that can be seen and spoken about are aspects of this type of signals as well as body symptoms and body experiences that can be measured or observed.

Non-consensual signals include the *dreamlike* aspects of our experiences that last long enough to be spoken about and described, yet will not be seen (consented upon) as "real" by others. Such signals include dream images, the subjective feeling of someone poking me in the stomach, the internal voice of a critic, etc.

Double Signals

A **double signal** means that two different signals occur simultaneously. That is, I send out one signal with which I identify, and at the same time, I send out *another* signal, a *double signal*, with which I do not identify.

See the picture of two men greeting one another. If we look at the man on the right, we see that his *intention* or *primary process* is to greet and relate to the man on the left. We notice this through his body signals of facing the other man and shaking his hand.

At the same time we can notice his *double signals*, which do not go along with this primary intention. That is, his head and eyes are focused slightly downward. These are double signals indicating that *another* process is trying to happen with which he does not identify. These signals are secondary, that is, further away from his momentary identity.

Now, it's interesting to realize that both his signals of turning toward the other man *and also* looking downward are *consensual* signals. Why? Because we can *observe* and *speak about* all of these signals. However, there is also a *dreamlike* or *non-consensual* aspect in his double signals. If he were to use

his awareness to *amplify* (or intensify) the signal of his downward gaze and let it *unfold* until it reveals what it is expressing, he might discover that he would actually like to go inside of himself and become very meditative. This is *non-consensual* because, from the outside, others will not necessarily agree about his subjective experience of that signal.

Body Symptoms

Much like double signals, we can also look at the consensual and nonconsensual aspects of a body symptom. Imagine that I have a pain in my stomach. In ordinary reality, allopathic medicine can measure the amount of acid in my stomach and say that I have gastro-esophageal reflux. This is the *consensual* aspect of this signal. However simultaneously, there is a *non-consensual* or *dreamlike* aspect of that stomach pain that I might experience, for example, as an immense fire that is burning up everything that stops me from diving into my creativity!

Two Levels of Awareness: Consensus Reality and Dreamland

From these discoveries, Arny began to explicate two levels of awareness: ***Consensus Reality*** and ***Dreamland***.⁷

As the examples suggest, the *Consensus Reality* level refers to all of those signals and experiences that most people agree upon as real or consensual (in a given society or culture). In terms of signals, these include, for example, body signals that we can understand and the allopathic or medical understanding of body symptoms. *Dreamland*, as you can imagine, includes all of the *dreamlike experiences behind* consensual signals, such as the personal meaning behind double signals, the images from our dreams at night, and the subjective experiences of our body symptoms.

Both Consensus Reality and Dreamland are ***dualistic***, meaning that they include separable parts that are in relationship to, and can dialogue with, one another. For example, imagine that you have a stomach ache. On the Consensus Reality level, one part is you with your stomach ache, and another part might be a doctor who gives a medical diagnosis. On the Dreamland level, you might experience your stomach pain as a conflict between two parts such as a wild figure that wants to break out and be free, and another figure that wants to be quiet and inward.

In groups and organizations, on the Consensus Reality level, there are different people in relationship to, or in conflict with, one another. On the Dreamland level, we can identify different *roles* that interact with one another. The concept of roles means that we are not just *real* people on one

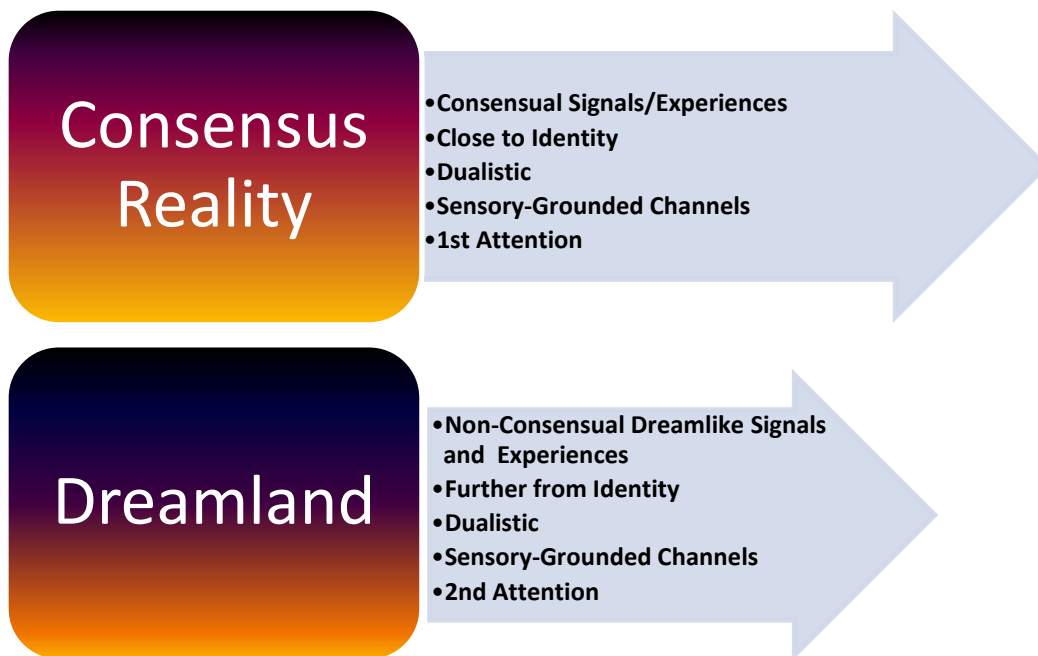
side or another of a given issue, but all of the sides are more like roles that are shared by everyone and in relationship to one another.⁸

First and Second Attention

When we use our awareness to focus on *Consensus Reality* experiences, Arny called this a *1st Attention*. When we focus on the Dreamland level, he called this our *2nd Attention*.

Characteristics of Consensus Reality and Dreamland

Here is a summary of some of the characteristics of these two levels:



Metaskills

In addition to the development of many important skills for following the flow of our experiences in *Consensus Reality* and *Dreamland*, I added to this developing theory (in 1995) by defining a new concept I called **Metaskills**.⁹ *Metaskills* refer to the feeling qualities or attitudes with which we use our skills. For example, if you are painting, *Metaskills* refers to **the way** that you use your paintbrush. You can use it with lightness, intensity, power, spontaneity, etc. When working with other people, you can work with their signals, for example, with a light or a heavy touch. When working with a group, you might use your skills in a



strongly focused or detached way. Metaskills lay behind our more overt skills and are the way in which our deepest beliefs arise in practice.

Pictorial Summary of the 1st Branch

Let me summarize some of the many concepts that we find in the first branch of process theory in the following picture.



THE SECOND BRANCH: Deep Democracy and the Essence Level



Quantum Physics and Pre-Signals

In the late 1990s, a new branch of Process Work theory took root. Actually, a central aspect of its theory, which had always been subtly present in the background, came more to the foreground.

This new branch began when Arny returned to his studies of theoretical physics.¹⁰ He focused most specifically on quantum physics, and particularly the ideas surrounding the quantum wave function—that is, the basic pattern behind matter that can be formulated mathematically but cannot be seen directly. These studies of the immeasurable quantum wave function that exists prior to matter pointed toward yet *another* type of *signal*.¹¹

Arny realized that the quantum wave is not only a mathematical construct, but also something that can be *experienced*. He began to wonder what type of signal we might experience *before* it becomes “material” or clearly defined—that is, before it persists and can be spoken about in words. His intuition led him to discover *subtle signals* or *pre-signals*.¹²

Pre-signals can be experienced as subtle tendencies that occur *before* they can be verbalized, such as a slight tendency to move before actually moving, vague intuitions, and very subtle feelings. These *pre-signals* or *sentient experiences*, as he called them, are like seeds from which more overt signals and experiences arise. As these sentient experiences emerge, they begin to break up into parts and polarities, expressing themselves in more stable form and through the various sensory-grounded channels. We usually notice these

subtle signals only later, when they evolve and manifest in the form of more overt and persistent signals.

The signals in this new realm are:

- *subtle*
- **non-consensual** (people will not agree upon these experiences)
- *fleeting*
- *cannot quite be verbalized*
- **non-dualistic**, meaning that there is an experience of oneness, without separate polarities or parts
- **pre-channel-oriented**, meaning that they occur prior to their expression through any sensory-grounded channel

The Essence Level

Arny pointed out that many peoples throughout time have described what we now call the *quantum wave function* as a subtle layer of experience that occurs prior to any manifestation in the material world. For example, the Aboriginal Australian concept of the *Dreaming* lies behind and gives birth to the physical world. In Taoism, we find the concept of *the Tao that cannot be said*, which is the mother of all things. Other spiritual traditions might call it *oneness*, the *spirit*, or the sense of *wholeness*.¹³

Arny called this whole realm of experience the **Essence** or **Sentient Essence level**.¹⁴ Of course, because this sentient area cannot really be formulated in words, any description is not quite correct. At best, descriptions merely point toward these immeasurable experiences.

Nonlocality

When we experience this sentient realm, it takes us out of the world of duality. It is an experience of a deep, eternal, or cosmic aspect of ourselves that we may experience only in deep meditation, when we are asleep, during ecstatic states, in near-death experiences, or sometimes through the use of drugs or addictive substances. In this realm, there is a sense of *oneness*, beyond polarities and dualistic experiences, which often connects us with others, even at a distance (**non-locally**).¹⁵ When we begin to notice and spend time unfolding these experiences, they may spontaneously emerge as separable parts in *Dreamland* and as information that can be useful for our everyday lives in *Consensus Reality*.

Here is a relatively simple way to experience the Essence level. Imagine that you have a headache and that you make a strong fist to show what the pain in your head is like. Now, still *continuing to feel the intensity* of that

headache, make that fist again but now with just a bit less exertion, and then even a bit less strongly. As you do that, meditate on the root or essence of that experience. That is, what was at the very core or beginning of that intensity before it became so strong and created a fist (or headache)? This is the sentient essence of your experience. When one woman felt the root or essence of her headache she said it was a feeling of being very centered and deep within herself.

Precursors of the Sentient Essence

My studies revealed that this sentient realm existed previously in process theory, but had not been directly delineated or illuminated. I intuited that it must have been present in some form because my experience of sentience felt utterly fundamental to my understanding of process. For those familiar with some aspects of Process Work, the following may give some hints as to some of the precursors of this sentient awareness.

Process: The very concept of *process* means that there is a subtle flow behind even apparently static events: *The Tao that cannot be said* or a creative well from which all things arise and flow.

The Dreaming Process and the Dreambody: Arny's original concept of the *dreaming process* is one early description of the Essence level. Though the first branch of theory focused on the signals that can be seen and spoken about, I always understood that they emanate from the deep and ever-creative *dreaming process*: a deep and mysterious pattern that ultimately manifests through various channels and signals that we can identify and experience. In addition, Arny's concept of the *Dreambody*¹⁶ pointed toward the subtle realm that lies behind physical experiences.

Irreducible Experience: Many years ago, Arny spoke of the *irreducible experience*¹⁷ referring to a moment when our primary and secondary experiences disappear or merge and we find ourselves simply in the flow of process. At that moment there are no longer polarities but instead an experience of oneness. Arny said, "Something is irreducible when you can't dissect it further into its parts without destroying it."¹⁸ This concept hinted toward the Essence realm and non-duality. Many years ago, I developed a flow chart¹⁹ that alluded to this irreducible experience. It showed that once we enter into a primary process, then a secondary one, and so on, all differentiable processes collapse into a single, unified experience.

The Spiritual Channel: In the late 1980's and early 90s, Arny and others working with Process Work concepts spoke about a *spiritual channel*. The

spiritual channel referred to experiences people had that they could not easily formulate in words or in terms of any of the known sensory-grounded channels. People spoke of a connection with the "spirit", of an all-encompassing feeling of unity, which took them beyond polarities.

Coma Work: Coma work, developed by Arny from the mid-1970s to the present, connects to the deep, sentient, altered-state experiences of a comatose person. The helper focuses upon those signals that can be observed as well as the subtle tendencies that occur *before* the complete expression of facial gestures, hand motions, images, etc. Since many people in coma, particularly those who have suffered from brain injury, may not have the internal connections to express themselves in everyday terms, connection with these earliest tendencies are crucial for communication, support, and rehabilitation.²⁰

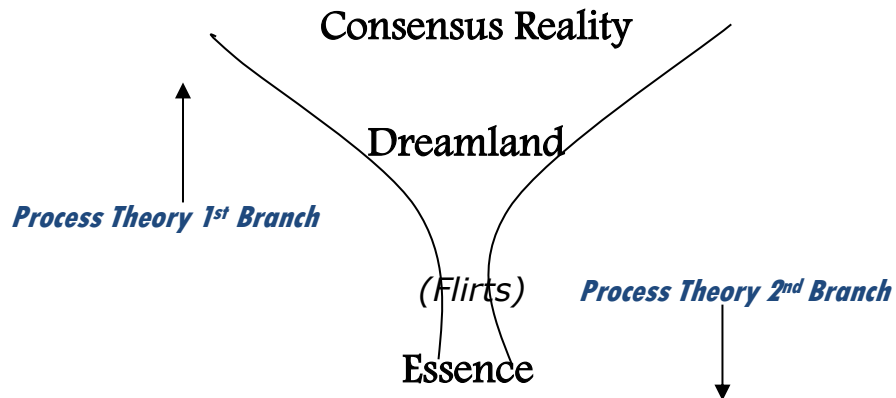
Predecessors in Psychology and Spirituality: Many of Process Work's psychological predecessors hinted toward a sentient realm. We can think of Jung's "unconscious" and Freud's "subconscious." Later, transpersonal psychology steered psychology toward the sentient realm as it focused on a person's capacity to go beyond the "ego" and experience a more spiritual or transcendent state.²¹ Authentic movement approached this realm by focusing on the sense of "being moved."²²

Many spiritual disciplines important to Process Work's lineage also point toward the sentient realm, such as the Zen concept of *no mind* or *creative mind*, Taoism's *Tao that can't be said*, as well as many meditation and mystical practices that focus on a sense of oneness and the flow of experience.²³ Shamanism, which has always been central to Arny's development of Process Work, illuminates the sentient realm with its focus on altered states and experiences that extend beyond ordinary space and time.²⁴

Map of Realities and Deep Democracy

In order to place some of the new and earlier theoretical concepts together into a larger context, let's consider Arny's map (below) of the various levels of reality.²⁵ This map helps us to see where the Essence level lies relative to other level of awareness that we have focused upon until now.

MAP OF REALITIES



Arny called the larger framework that includes all levels **Deep Democracy**.²⁶ *Deep Democracy* refers to the philosophy and practice of facilitating openness to all experiences and parts of ourselves, of our relationships, and of the groups to which we belong, as well as an openness to all of the various *levels* of awareness. These include *Consensus Reality*, *Dreamland*, and the *Essence* levels. A process worker attempts to notice and focus on each realm as it arises and to follow the fluid movement between the realms, whether working with an individual, with two people in a relationship, or with a group.

Let me repeat that *Consensus Reality* refers to the everyday reality that most people acknowledge (consent to), the consensual aspects of body symptoms, and the signals that can be spoken about and agreed upon. In group work, for example, this level can include the facts of a given situation, the issues people want to focus on (e.g., policies, finances, social issues, etc...) and the differences in rank (i.e., who has more or less power) that are a concern to the participants. These matters and experiences are consensual and dualistic.

Dreamland includes dreamlike experiences and signals that persist, such as images from dreams or subjective experiences of symptoms (e.g., my image and feeling that a big monster is pressing on my head!). It also includes the subjective experiences of our double signals, such as saying that I want to relate to someone while my eyes are simultaneously looking downward indicating that I would like to focus more internally. In groups, this realm can include awareness of such things as roles, role switching, and ghost roles.²⁷ These experiences are non-consensual and dualistic.

The Essence level adds the realm of subtle tendencies that occur *before* they can be verbalized, such as a *tendency* to move before moving. Experiences here are the seed, or core, of an experience from which the other realms of Consensus Reality and Dreamland arise. The Essence level is a non-consensual realm. Experiences in this realm are subtle, fleeting, and cannot be easily verbalized. They are also “pre-channel” in the sense that they have not yet expressed themselves through the various sensory-grounded channels. This is why Arny sometimes speaks of experiences in the Essence level in terms of *synesthesia*²⁸—that is, the experience of channels overlapping such that parts cannot be easily discerned or identified. In a group, the Essence level may appear in moments when a sense of common ground or direction arises.

Parallel Worlds and Hyperspaces

There are a couple of other concepts from physics that I feel are crucial to understand the interrelationship between these levels of experience. A most helpful concept is called ***parallel worlds***.²⁹ Simply stated, the concept of parallel worlds implies that a multiplicity of worlds exists simultaneously, though we generally tend to focus only on one while overlooking the rest.

Implicit in the theory of parallel worlds is the ability to move from any of these levels of experience to others. For example, if we start with an experience in Consensus Reality, we can ask ourselves about the essence of that experience. If we begin with sentient experiences in the Essence realm, we can observe how these tendencies naturally unfold creatively into Dreamland and Consensus Reality.

The concept of ***hyperspaces*** in physics is closely associated with parallel worlds.³⁰ A hyperspace is a dimension. Physics tells us that if we are stuck in one dimension, we can go to another dimension to find the solution.³¹ If we cannot untie a knot in three dimensions, add a fourth. Psychologically speaking, if we are stuck in Consensus Reality with a problem, we can go to the Dreamland level. If that doesn't help, we can always go to the Essence level.

Flirts

If you take another look at the Map of Realities diagram above, you will see that just above the Essence level there is an area called ***flirts***.³² Flirts are the first way in which the essence world arises in our awareness. Arny uses the term *flirts* in this context to refer to fleeting nonverbal sensations, visions, sounds, moods, hunches, etc., that occur so rapidly that we don't quite notice them with our awareness. For example, our attention might be caught

for a split second by the brilliant color of a flower on the side of a road. Flirt-like experiences are of such brief duration that we normally do not hold on to them long enough to unfold them into our consciousness. They are fleeting and non-consensual.

Flirts lie between the dual and non-dual worlds. They are dualistic because we notice them. However, if we take the time to go further into these experiences and reflect upon them, we sense that we become one with them (non-dualistic).³³

Marginalization

In the first branch of Process Work I spoke about the concept of the **edge**, which refers to the boundary between our known worlds or primary processes, and the new and unknown worlds and experiences of our secondary processes. We can use our everyday awareness to notice when we get to an edge; that is when we come to the limits of our primary identity and are shy to step into unknown and new experiences. Edges are connected with the realms of Consensus Reality and Dreamland.

Once we enter the realms of the Essence and Flirts, we need an additional term. Arny introduced the concept of **marginalization** to refer to the more subtle process of marginalizing or disregarding tiny sentient and flirt-like experiences *before* they arise and can be spoken about with our everyday awareness.³⁴

First, Second, and Third Attentions

As mentioned previously, focusing our awareness on any particular level can be understood as a type of "attention." In addition to the *First and Second Attentions* (spoken about earlier), Arny added a *Third Attention, lucidity*, to refer to the ability to notice subtle tendencies and pre-signals in the Flirt and Essence realms. Lucid attention requires that we have a mind that is sufficiently open, empty, and foggy or diffused to notice and nurture subtle experiences.³⁵

Let me summarize the various attentions here:

- ❖ The **First Attention** focuses on Consensus Reality time and space, causality, consensual signals, etc.

- ❖ The **Second Attention** focuses on non-consensual and unintentional experiences such as double signals, dream figures, ghost roles, etc., that appear in Dreamland.

- ❖ The ***Third Attention*** focuses on altered essence-like experiences. It requires having a *lucid* focus to notice subtle tendencies, noncognitive experiences, flirts, and (as we will see below) the experience of *Spacetime Dreaming*, etc.

The Intentional Field

In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Arny and I explored many aspects of the Essence and Flirt realms in our seminars and classes. During one of our seminars in 2002, which we called "Big Medicine," we focused on a very specific aspect of the Essence world called the ***Intentional Field***.

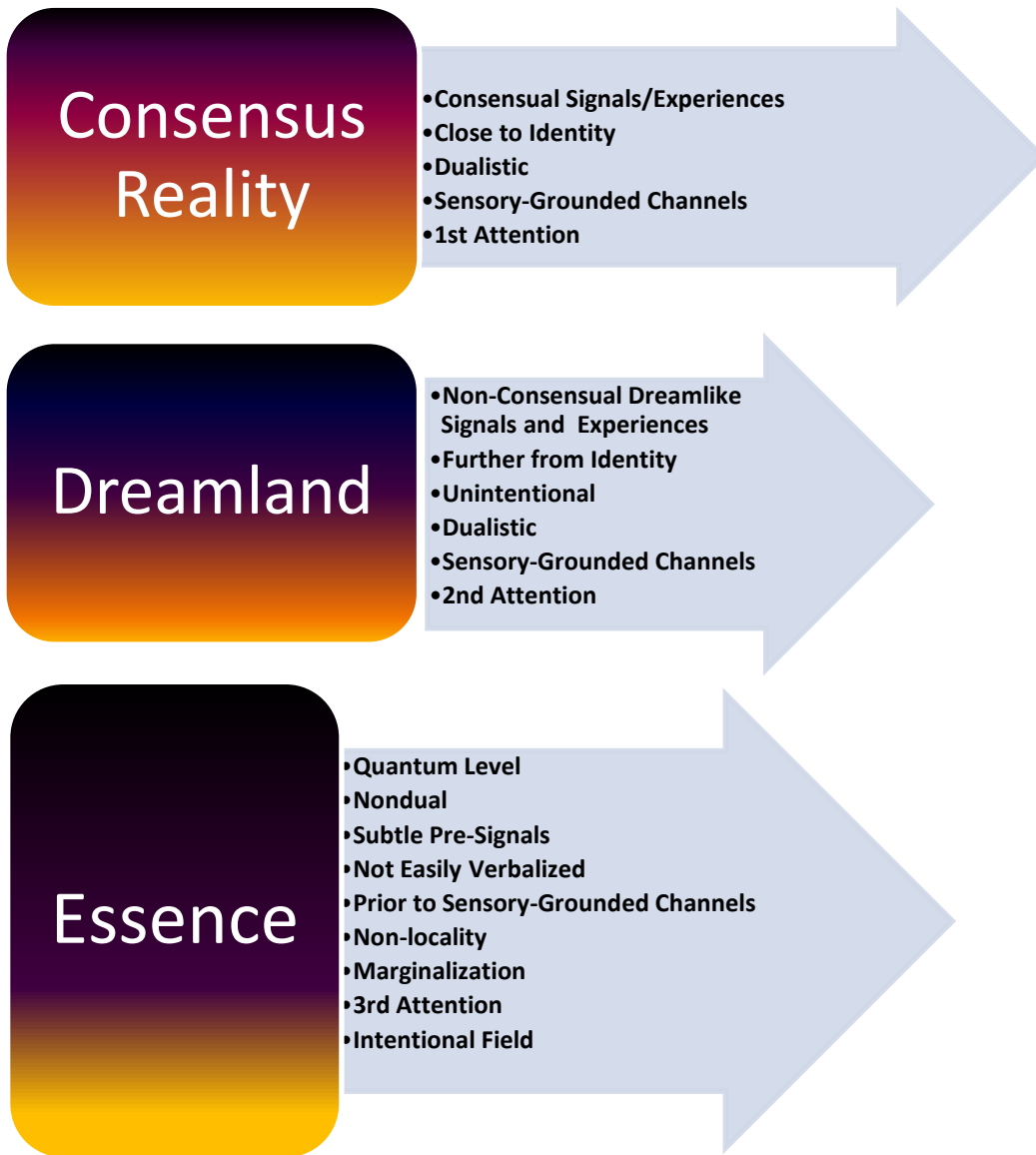
The *Intentional Field* (or the *Force of Silence*³⁶) is a term Arny used to re-interpret the quantum wave function. Simply stated, the *Intentional Field* is a mysterious field that is moving us. You can imagine it like a magnetic field that organizes and guides us through life; a guiding wave that is invisible and immeasurable. We may experience this intentional field near death, when it expresses itself most fully, though it has always been there, subtly moving and influencing our lives. Arny also referred to the *Intentional Field* as the *Quantum Mind*, "that aspect of our psychology that corresponds to basic aspects of quantum physics."³⁷

The study of the *Intentional Field* revealed the way in which an invisible force is always moving us, though we are often unaware of its presence. It requires a sentient awareness to focus on the subtlety of its pull and force. This discovery would prove to be the beginning of many new developments to come.

Here is a hint about one way to experience the force and feeling of the *Intentional Field*.³⁸ Sitting at the end of your chair, notice the slightest tendency to move, but don't move yet. Notice that subtle tendency, stay close to it. Finally, let this tendency begin to unfold through your body in movement and then in images, sounds, or words, and perhaps it will spontaneously explain its meaning to you.

Diagram of the Three Levels

Before moving on to the third branch, let me offer a diagram of the three levels of Deep Democracy³⁹ with some main characteristics of each level:



The Three Levels

Pictorial Summary of the 2nd Branch

Here is a picture that summarizes some of the elements of this 2nd branch of process theory:



The Third Branch: EARTH AND UNIVERSE



The discovery of the *Intentional Field*, the subtle force that moves and guides us through life, sparked the beginning, I believe, of a third branch of Process Work's development (between 2007 and the present day, 2016). This 3rd branch not only grew further outward and upward but also began to reach downward into the tree's roots and into the earth herself. This development began to illuminate our intimate relationship with the planet Earth and finally with the vast universe around us. Let's take a look.

Vectors, the Big U, and Earth-Based Psychology

Through his further explorations of the *Essence* world and the *Intentional Field*, Arny began to study the way in which this subtle force is intimately connected with the earth. His studies of Aboriginal Australia revealed to him what the Aborigines have always known: that each feeling we have is intimately connected with directions on the earth. He began to explore the way that each of our feelings, every dream figure, and every part of us is related to a specific earth direction.⁴⁰ That is, if you feel a particular feeling or dream figure and then let the earth turn you, the earth will show you what direction on earth that feeling or figure goes toward. For example, if you dream of a newborn baby, you might turn toward the rising sun where life renews itself again and again.

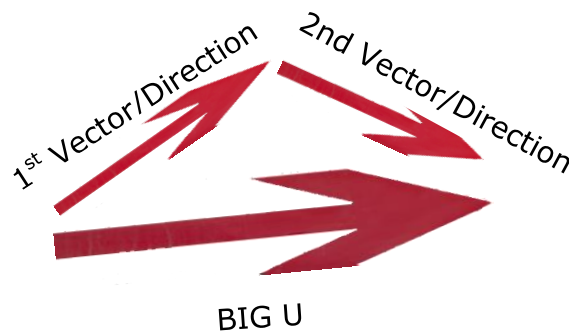
We all know this feeling of being turned in a particular direction, but many of us are not consciously aware of it. For example, when you enter a room where there will be a lecture, or you go to a movie, you tend to gravitate

toward a particular location or area to sit in. When you are in nature, you tend to move toward certain spots that seem to pull you.

Once you let the earth show you the direction of a particular figure or feeling, you can walk in that direction and notice what kinds of experiences you have. The resulting path that you walked is a **vector**. *Vectors* (a term from mathematics meaning *strength* and *direction*) are like arrows going in a particular direction.



Arny then discovered something remarkable. It arose out of his knowledge of (vector) mathematics. That is, you can add together all of your various feelings or dream figures by walking each of their earth directions (vectors), one after the other, and then find their sum by walking from the beginning point to the end point. He called this final path or overall (vector) direction the **Big U** or the *sum* of all of your parts and directions (subvectors).⁴¹ At the same time, it is a wisdom direction and feeling that encompass and embraces all paths. This final direction can also be personified as some sort of figure that represents that final *Big U path*.⁴²



This exploration led to Arny's ***Earth-Based Psychology***,⁴³ a new approach to psychology that understands ourselves not only as part of the human world, divorced from the earth, but the way in which our lives and feelings are intimately embedded in, and connected to, the earth around us.⁴⁴

The Process Mind

After the appearance of *Earth-Based Psychology* in 2007, things focus moved even more deeply into our relationship with the earth. While pondering the way in which a particular feeling turns us toward a direction on the earth, Arny wondered, "What is the *intelligence* that knows where to turn us?" That is, there must be some wisdom or organizing principle that knows in which

direction we need to go in a given moment. Arny called this organizing intelligence, the ***Process Mind***.⁴⁵

Whereas the *Big U* is experienced in terms of vectors or directions on the earth, the *Process Mind* is the larger *force-field-like intelligence* behind these directions, a force field out of which our vectors and all experiences arise. It is a subtle and creative intelligence organizing our spontaneous experiences; a governing, background, all-knowing presence and unifying power that moves us about. When we are in touch with the *Process Mind* we experience it as a great guide that can help us move through, dance, and flow with experiences. It is always there, and if we are lost or disoriented, we can turn to it again and again for guidance. The *Process Mind* concept is mirrored, in part, in terms of the various worldwide god images and concepts.



The *Process Mind* is *nondualistic*; it is a kind of oneness that exists outside of polarities. Therefore, being in contact with it can be especially helpful when dealing with the dualities and polarities found in *Consensus Reality* and *Dreamland*.

Like the *Big U*, the *Process Mind* is intimately related to the earth. Whereas vectors are related to *directions* on the earth, the *Process Mind* is connected to *specific spots* on the earth. Returning to Aboriginal thinking, Australian Aborigines believe that when a mother, in her fifth month of pregnancy, walks by some particular place on earth, a totem spirit of that earth spot jumps into her belly.⁴⁶ Each of us can be understood as a representative of a particular earth-spot; an incarnation of that totem spirit in that place on earth. The totem spirit is our basic self, our basic myth expressed in terms of a field-like earth presence. When we are close to our *Process Minds* and associated earth spots, there is a sense of being at home, close to our deepest self.

Here is a hint about a simple way to sense your *Process Mind*.⁴⁷ First, ask yourself where you feel the deepest part of you in your body. Feel that body area and then associate the feeling of that body location to a particular place on the earth. Then imagine that you go to that special piece of earth and feel the way in which you are moved by its presence and power; feel the spirit of the place. Finally, shapeshift and become that spot yourself. From its

viewpoint and feeling, you can flow and work with your various individual parts, feelings, dream figures, etc.

This inner work is an Essence level meditation. It does not depend on your ability to use skills associated with the realms of Consensus Reality or Dreamland such as noticing edges, signals, or channels. Rather, it relies on the wisdom of the *Process Mind* earth field and its nonlocal nature in order to know how to deal and flow with our various experiences, even if they are in great conflict.

The *Process Mind* can be found for individuals as well as for relationships and groups. Each relationship and group has a *Process Mind*, the field-like earth spot that the people or group experiences as its "home." You can discover the group or couple's process mind in many ways. One way is to ask, "What spot in a room, or in your imagination, is the most characteristic or favorite spot of that relationship or group?" Then you can associate that spot to a particular earth spot.⁴⁸

The *Process Mind* both contains all the parts and is a stable center point, the elder-facilitator able to flow with our overall process. It is a basic feeling within each of us; the part us of that knows all of our parts and also knows how to flow with and process the interaction between them whether inside of ourselves, in relationships, or in groups. From its slightly altered state and earth basis, the *Process Mind* experience often brings new and illuminating ways of dealing with life's situations that we may not have imagined from our ordinary states of mind.

Process Mind and the Metacommunicator

The *Process Mind* connects to an earlier process work concept, the *Metacommunicator*.⁴⁹ The *Metacommunicator* is the part of each of us that can stand outside of whatever is going on, track, and process our experiences. In earlier process thinking, the *Metacommunicator* was viewed as a primarily neutral concept or neutral observer. Today, the *Process Mind* updates the *Metacommunicator* concept by seeing that this part of us is not simply neutral and spaceless, but actually connected to an earth spot and has a special and unique presence and power. Therefore, it has a very special way of flowing with events and parts both in ourselves and with others. Our *Process Minds* inform and create our unique style in life and in our work.

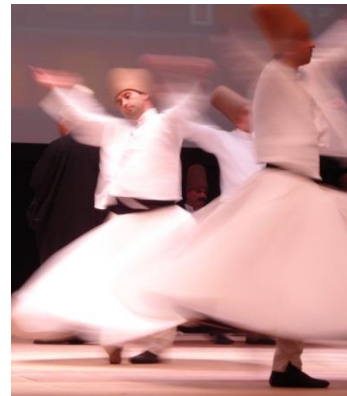
X and u Energies

While he was developing the Process Mind concept, Arny began to refer to what he called the **X** and the **u energies**.⁵⁰ The **X energy** refers to those

energies that we tend to “divorce” or do not like (whether those energies are in ourselves, in our relationships, or in groups or organizations), whereas the **u energy** refers to our ordinary, everyday type of energy.

The **X** and **u** are similar to the earlier concepts of **primary and secondary processes** but focus particularly on the *somatic energies* behind them. The **X** refers to the energy of any secondary process that you tend to marginalize and that comes up again and again. The **u** refers to your ordinary primary energy. The use of the simple terms of *X* and *u* helped to make the work even more accessible to the general public, with or without psychological training.

Arny then realized that both the *X* and the *u* energies can be found in our favorite earth spots. Therefore, our Process Mind earth spots can help facilitate the interaction between the *X* and *u*. For example, a man was disturbed by a very harsh *X energy* of someone he does not like. His normal *u energy* is *gentle and flowing*. His *Process Mind* earth spot is by the seashore. When he looked around the seashore, he found the “*X*” type of energy in the intense crashing waves and the “*u*” type of energy in the quiet waters way out at sea. He then let himself be moved by the power and feeling of his earth spot and sensed how both energies are actually parts of *one system* or *dance*. This experience then helped him flow between both energies and to even discover new ways to deal with their interaction.⁵¹



Spacetime Dreaming

Now in the summer of 2016, I’ll try to bring us up to the present moment. After exploring our relationship to the earth and the publication of his *Process Mind*, Arny began to speak about the way in which we are not only part of the earth, but the earth itself is embedded in the larger universe. Therefore, we can also get in touch with our eldership by directly connecting to our experience of the universe, or the force field around us. He called this *Spacetime Dreaming*. In 2013 he published his book on the subject, called *Dance of the Ancient One*.

Simply said, *Spacetime Dreaming* has to do with the feeling of being moved about by the spaces around you, that is, by the universe. This idea is closely connected to Einstein’s concept of relativity and the idea that space is curved. Everyone knows this experience when in deep sleep or when we are just about to fall asleep. We all seem to long for this state of letting go and

being moved now and then. Much like the Process Mind experience, when in contact with Spacetime Dreaming, we can feel a great universal elder that is able to work with our various parts, conflicts, and life events, with new types of insights and spontaneous resolutions.

The experience of *Spacetime Dreaming* is something that people and communities have known and experienced throughout time in order to feel closer to the cosmos around them and to understand their place within it. Many ritual dances around the world, from earliest times, mirrored the motion of the stars and heavens in order to get in touch with a greater power and to feel part of the larger cosmos.

Here is a hint as to how to experience Spacetime Dreaming. Relax for a moment and let go of your ordinary mind.⁵² Then, when you are ready, feel the spaces and larger universe around you, and then imagine that those spaces begin to move you about smoothly and even a bit spontaneously. If you were working on a conflict between particular X and u energies, you will probably notice how both of those energies appear in your dance. Continue to dance until your movements bring you spontaneous and surprising insights or ideas about life and/or about the conflict on which you were working.

First and Second Trainings

The development of the *Process Mind* and *Spacetime Dreaming* has led to the idea of what Arny and I call the **First and Second Trainings**.⁵³

The **First Training** refers to learning skills and methods to work with ourselves and others, such as noticing signals, channels, role switching, etc. The **Second Training** focuses on the deeper inner development of the facilitator/elder and openness to subtle Essence-level experiences.

The *Process Mind* and *Spacetime Dreaming* are integral parts of this Second Training. They can help anyone, and particularly facilitators, relax, let go, and allow the larger field or system mind, with its intelligence and wisdom, move them about and bring up new insights and resolutions. They can also help us gain greater detachment, get in touch with the various conflictual energies we are working on within ourselves, in relationships, and in groups, and begin to elder all sides.

The Second Training is especially important in moments when facilitators are not able to use the First Training skills that they have learned. This might happen, for example, during tense group situations when the facilitator gets

very polarized; during situations in which the facilitator loses awareness and can't remember her or his skills; or when she or he gets depressed, nervous, etc. In those moments, the facilitator's First Training may be too far from awareness. She or he may need something to help gain distance from difficulties and to reveal the wisdom of the field around her or him.

Pictorial Summary of the Third Branch

There is so much more to say about this third branch, but let me conclude this section by showing some of the central concepts of this third process theory branch. These concepts help take us into the earth and further into the universe.



Conclusion

There is a great deal more to explore about the Process Mind, Spacetime Dreaming, and the entire sentient essence realm, as well as the rest of Process Work's theory and practice.

Remember, the First Branch is associated with various applications of Process Work, its basic concepts, and the realms of Consensus Reality and Dreamland.

The Second Branch began with Arny's studies of quantum physics, where he focused on our most subtle experiences at the Essence level before these experiences can be expressed in images or words.

The Third Branch connects our psychology with the earth and universe around us. Here we find the concepts of vectors and fields that move us. After that came the idea of the Process Mind, earth spots, *Spacetime Dreaming* and universal field experiences. When we are in touch with the Process Mind and Spacetime dreaming, we can discover our eldership and ability to flow with all parts and energies.

I hope this summary of the evolution of process theory inspires all of us to learn even more about this fascinating body of work and research.

In summary, let me offer a chart that draws some of these ideas and concepts together.⁵⁴ I hope it will be useful to you in connecting the past with the present and the evolving future.

LEVELS OF EXPERIENCE CHART

LEVEL	<u>CR/NCR</u>	<u>Dual/Non Dual</u>	<u>Signals</u>	<u>PW Concepts</u>	<u>Some Methods</u>
<p>CONSENSUS REALITY Everyday reality, “real” part of symptoms (e.g., blood pressure, headache, acid stomach; consensual names and measures), signals and the CR part of double signals (e.g., eyes down while relating)</p>	<p>CR Consented upon; people will agree about these experiences</p>	<p>Parts</p>	<p>Persist; can be formulated in words and observed</p>	<p>Signals, sensory-grounded information, double signals, primary and secondary processes, channels, consciousness</p>	<p>Awareness, observation of signals, amplification, unfolding, exploring edges, etc.</p>
<p><u>DREAMLAND</u> Dream figures, dream-like aspects of symptoms (e.g., stabbing pain in head, fire in stomach), subjective experience (e.g., “I feel spacey”), dreamlike aspect of double signals (e.g., relating while eyes go down expressing a desire to go inward.)</p>	<p>NCR Not consented upon; people will not agree on these experiences</p>	<p>Dualistic Parts</p>	<p>Persist long enough to be formulated in words, often repeat, incomplete, secondary</p>	<p>Same as above; incomplete, secondary signals, unoccupied channels, edges, consciousness</p>	<p>Same as above</p>
<p><u>FLIRTS</u> Flickering, nonverbal sensations that catch our attention</p> <p><u>VECTORS</u> Feelings and parts are vector directions on the earth; Big U as the sum of all vectors; Earth-Based Psychology</p>	<p>NCR Not consented upon</p>	<p>Between dual and non-dual worlds</p>	<p>Flickering signals; persist long enough to notice but very quick and fleeting</p> <p>Subtle sense of the earth turning you in various directions</p>	<p>Marginalization, flirts, lucidity, pre-signals</p> <p>Vectors/earth directions Big U</p>	<p>Foggy mind, Catching a flirt Getting to the essence of any experience and letting it unfold, etc</p> <p>Walking directions the earth turns you in association with feelings and dream images/figures; add directions to find the Big U</p>

<p>ESSENCE Pre-signals, subtle tendencies and vague intuitions that can't be verbalized = Intentional field, quantum wave, pilot wave, guiding wave, Dreaming, Tao that can't be said, oneness, sentient essence,</p> <p>Earth-Based Psychology, Process Mind as intelligence behind all directions and parts and connected with earth spots, and Spacetime Dreaming</p>	<p>NCR Not consented or agreed upon</p> <p>NCR Not consented or agreed upon.</p>	<p>Non-dual; no parts</p> <p>Non-Dual No Parts</p>	<p>Pre-signals, subtle, can't be formulated or verbalized, invisible and immeasurable, nonlocal, pre-channel, ground from which ordinary signals in Dreamland and Consensus Reality arise</p> <p>Essence sense of connection between deepest self and spots on the earth and the larger universe.</p>	<p>Marginalization Pre-signals, Tendencies Lucidity</p> <p>Process Mind; earth spot and totem spirit; Spacetime Dreaming</p>	<p>Subtle movement tendencies; slow movement and micro-movements to get to the essence of experiences; coma work, asking what was there before the experience was so big, etc.</p> <p>Sense of deepest self in body as earth spot; the best room or atmosphere of a relationship or group as an earth-based spot; using earth spot presence, power, and atmosphere (Process Mind) to work with yourself and others; experience of "being moved" by the spaces of the universe around you (Spacetime Dreaming)</p>
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References

For numerous books and articles about Process Work, its theory and many creative applications, see the writings of Process Work students and teachers at the website for the International Association of Process Oriented Psychology (IAPOP) at the following links:

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<http://www.iapop.com/bibliography-3/>

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End Notes

- ¹ For more about Process Work theory and its applications, see the bibliography and the "Resources" tab on the IAPOP website (<http://www.iapop.com/>).
- ² For some of Arny's early theoretical ideas, see his *River's Way: The Process Science of the Dreambody*.
- ³ See Arny's *Dreambody*, 1982.
- ⁴ Arny's *Leader as Martial Artist*, p.11.
- ⁵ See, for example, Arny's *Working with the Dreaming Body* and *River's Way*; my *Metaskills*; Julie Diamond and Lee Jones's *A Path Made by Walking*, and Joe Goodbread's *Dreambody Toolkit*.
- ⁶ See Arny's discussion of Consensus Reality and Non-Consensus Reality in *Quantum Mind*, pp. 9–13.
- ⁷ See Arny's *Dreaming While Awake*, pp. 15 and 20, for more on these levels.
- ⁸ See Arny's *Sitting in the Fire*, p. 42.
- ⁹ See my *Metaskills: The Spiritual Art of Therapy*.
- ¹⁰ During the 1960s, Arny received his master's degree at MIT and then went on to study at the ETH, the technical institute in Zurich.
- ¹¹ Arny developed these ideas in *Quantum Mind*, *Dreaming While Awake*, *Quantum Mind and Healing*, and more recently, *Earth-Based Psychology*.
- ¹² See *Quantum Mind*, *Dreaming While Awake*, and *The Dreammaker's Apprentice*.
- ¹³ *Dreaming While Awake*, pp. 10–13, 20.
- ¹⁴ *Quantum Mind and Healing*, p. 82.
- ¹⁵ See, for example, Arny's *Dreaming While Awake*, pp. 72–75.
- ¹⁶ *Dreambody: The Body's Role in Revealing the Self*.
- ¹⁷ See our *Riding the Horse Backwards*, pp. 58–60.
- ¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 58.
- ¹⁹ See my article, "Magic: Notes on Some of the Magical Elements of Process Work," 1989.
- ²⁰ See my *Coma: A Healing Journey*; Arny's *Coma: The Dreambody Near Death*; as well as Pierre Morin and Gary Reiss's *Inside Coma: A New View of Awareness, Healing and Hope*.
- ²¹ See, for example, Roger Walsh and Frances Vaughan's *Beyond Ego: Transpersonal Dimensions in Psychology*.
- ²² See, for example, *Authentic Movement: Essays by Marty Starks-Whitehouse, Janet Adler and Joan Chodorow*.
- ²³ For more, see Arny's *Dreaming While Awake*, pp. 20–21.
- ²⁴ The first book that Arny wrote was the *Shaman's Body*. However, it only appeared in print in 1993. *Dreambody* was published in 1982.
- ²⁵ For more on this map, see Arny's *Dreaming While Awake*, pp. 15, 20.
- ²⁶ *Leader as Martial Artist*, 1992.
- ²⁷ See Arny's books *Leader as Martial Artist*, *Sitting in the Fire*, and *The Deep Democracy of Open Forums*; also see my articles "Bringing Deep Democracy to Life" and "Worldwork and the Politics of Dreaming."
- ²⁸ See, for example, *Process Mind*, pp. 59–60.
- ²⁹ See Arny's *Quantum Mind* (DDX version), pp. 233–244. Also see my article, "Amy's Hyperspaces: Creativity, the Bird of Paradise, and the Doorway to Parallel Worlds" (<http://www.aamindell.net/amys-hyperspaces>).
- ³⁰ See "Amy's Hyperspaces"; Arny's *Quantum Mind*, pp. 289–307; and Arny's *Quantum Mind and Healing*, pp. 43–59.
- ³¹ Albert Einstein said, "No problem can be solved by the same consciousness that created it." (<http://www.criticalthinking.com/critical-thinking-quotes>).
- ³² *Dreaming While Awake*: see, for example, pp. 23, 54.

³³ Arny describes this process of reflection (which can also be found mathematically in the quantum wave formula) in *Quantum Mind*, Chapter 8; *Dreaming While Awake*, Chapter 6; and *The Dreammaker's Apprentice*, pp. 74–76.

³⁴ See Arny's discussion about marginalization and edges in *Dreaming While Awake*, pp. 53–54.

³⁵ *Dance of the Ancient One*, p. 184.

³⁶ See *The Quantum Mind and Healing*.

³⁷ *Process Mind*, p. 5. Also see Arny's *Quantum Mind*.

³⁸ Arny introduces and elaborates upon this exercise in a section he calls "Movement Divination" in *Dreaming While Awake*, pp. 104–107.

³⁹ See *Quantum Mind and Healing*, pp. 81–82, for more on these levels, and pp. 109–110 for more on the three levels in terms of group communication.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 43–44.

⁴² You can find many examples of this vector addition in Arny's *Earth-Based Psychology*.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Process Mind: A User's Guide to Connecting with the Mind of God*.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 43.

⁴⁷ *Process Mind*, pp. 27–28.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 79–140 and 201–229 to find out more about the Process Mind in relationships and groups. Even if a group or couple is in strong disagreement, there is usually a room and spot on the earth, real or imagined, to which the people feel the most closely connected. By becoming that spot, with its presence and unique metaskills (feeling attitudes), you can gain a necessary detachment and guiding feeling to flow with the various aspects of the relationship or group in a more fluid manner

⁴⁹ *Working on Yourself Alone*, p. 18.

⁵⁰ For more about the $u+X$, see *Process Mind*, pp. 201–207.

⁵¹ We have explored many variations of this exercise in our seminars, such as one on the Oregon coast called "The Mind of God in Personal Life and in the World" (February 2009), and aspects of this exercise (including the experience of Spacetime Dreaming) can be found in Arny's *Dance of the Ancient One*. For example, see pp. 28–29.

⁵² Arny has many types of Spacetime Dreaming exercises in his book *Dance of the Ancient One*. For example, on p. 29 is an exercise to work with the $X+u$ of one of your worst problems by finding those energies in the earth and then using Spacetime Dreaming for new insights. To work with dreams, see the exercise on p. 106.

⁵³ For more on the 1st and 2nd Trainings, see Arny's forthcoming book, *Conflict: Phases, Forums, and Solutions: The "2nd Training" to Elder our Dreams and Body, Our Businesses, Governments, and Planet*.

⁵⁴ This chart expands upon Arny's chart in *The Dreammaker's Apprentice*, p.39.