

UNRAVELING THE AGONY OF PARADOX: A STUDY OF  
A PROCESS OF AWARENESS

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF  
THE DIPLOMA IN PROCESS WORK

FROM

THE PROCESS WORK INSTITUTE

PORTLAND, OREGON, USA

BY

JOY BROWN

DECEMBER 2006

COPYRIGHT

©

2007

by Joy Brown

*PLEASE DO NOT COPY NOR QUOTE ANY PART OF THIS THESIS WITHOUT PERMISSION FROM THE AUTHOR.*

## Acknowledgments

To my loving children, Shannon and Rory McCoy, who journeyed this path with me.

Aloha to the spirit of Sara Halprin. Sara presented me to the Process Work faculty as a formal student in 1997. She also was on my study committee. My last interaction with Sara on this earth was as she underwent chemotherapy on a hospital bed while she participated in my thesis review study committee meeting.

Special thanks and gratitude to my advisory committee members for the last ten years: Renata Ackermann, Gary Reiss, and Sara Halprin. Also to my primary therapists, supervisors, mentors, and teachers: Renata Ackermann, Jan Dworkin, Sara Halprin, Arny Mindell, Gary Reiss, and Sonja Straub.

Many thanks to my friends and colleagues who contemplated paradox with me: Claus Bargmann, Carole Christopher, Susanne Roessing, and Hitomi Sakamoto.

I am deeply appreciative of the Process Work Community with its remarkable atmosphere of being in the soup of learning and growing together. Thank you all.

**Abstract**

**Unraveling the Agony of Paradox: A Study of a Process of Awareness**

by

**Joy Brown**

This study contemplates the relationship of paradox to awareness and consciousness based on a hypothesis that there is a definable process in paradoxical experience which has potential to unfold into personal transformation. The purpose of this thesis is to advance understanding of the role of paradoxical experience in Process Work through an investigation of how to recognize paradox, what happens when it is encountered, and what may result by intentionally holding onto a paradoxical experience. This study contemplates Process Work theory and practice regarding paradox, reality, consciousness, and awareness.

## CONTENTS

Copyright .....	ii
Acknowledgments.....	iii
Chapter 1: Introduction .....	1
Snake Unhinges Her Jaws .....	1
Method and Serendipity.....	2
Background Influences and Bias .....	4
Chapter 2: The Process of Awareness .....	9
Paradox .....	10
Reality.....	16
Consciousness.....	20
Awareness.....	22
Chapter 3: Paradoxical Experience and Altered States.....	25
Schrödinger’s Cat Paradox .....	27
Alchemy.....	31
Altered States and Conflict Resolution.....	32
Altered and Extreme States .....	34
Lucidity.....	36
Chapter 4: Holistic Characteristics of Greater Awareness .....	39
Polarities .....	39
Wholeness as a Monster: A Dream Story.....	41
Paradox, Zen Koans and Fukushima Roshi.....	46

Catherine Ingram on Social Activism and Wholeness .....	51
Chapter 5: Paradox and Process Work.....	56
Paradoxical Questionnaire .....	59
Chapter 6: Conclusion.....	63
References.....	69

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The idea occurred to me in a daydream that awareness may be intentionally increased through paradoxical experience. This inspiration came as a vision of a snake opening her mouth and unhinging her jaws to consume large prey. From this simple vision, told below, my curiosity provided the impetus for this study and continues to intrigue me.

### *Snake Unhinges Her Jaws*

While I contemplated a topic for my Process Work thesis, I envisioned a snake opening her mouth as if intending to consume large prey. Curious, I watched as the snake's mouth opened wide, then wider still. To my amazement, her jaws smoothly unhinged and her mouth gaped open so immensely that it could encompass planets, stars, even the universe; hinting of an incomprehensible infinity. In a flash of insight, I understood the snake's ability to unhinge her jaws as a metaphor for our ability to expand our awareness through the "unhinging jaws" of paradoxical experience. I eventually realized this as a process of awareness in which paradoxical experience can be used as an inner awareness tool. Paradoxical experience could expand awareness, freeing it to flow into greater dimensions of consciousness beyond our ordinary, everyday perception.

*Method and Serendipity*

*" . . . you don't reach Serendib by plotting a course for it. You have to set out in good faith for elsewhere and lose your bearings . . . serendipitously."*  
*(Barth, 1991, p. 13)*

This is an autobiographical essay. I used a multimethod approach to gathering data for the research. I drew on my own and others' experiences, often gathering information through interviewing via different media, such as in person, on the phone, and by email. I invited metaphor, theoretical contemplation, and exploration of varied perspectives regarding paradox into my investigation of how paradoxical experience relates to awareness and where paradox exists in Process Work. I also sought original information from nonlinear sources such as visions, dreams, and relationships.

Like a snake's path, I took a sideways approach towards the goal of defining paradox which led me to also contemplate awareness and dreaming. In researching paradoxical experience, dreaming, awareness, and altered states, I became lost. I embarked upon a nonlinear process with another kind of direction. I wondered: What triggers the experience of paradox? What is the experience? What happens during and after the experience?

At times I felt a deep understanding of something . . . indefinable, rendering my questions momentarily into meaninglessness. I was mentally tongue-tied in my search for whatever it was I was seeking. It was impossible. I fell into an exasperated fugue and there I simmered and felt victimized by my own topic. I lost patience and I repeatedly threw my thesis and thoughts of paradox away but the world relentlessly threw it back at



me in the form of disappointed comments and requests I continue with this topic. Once, I literally buried my research in a storage unit to which I happily forgot the lock combination. However, a year later I came across the combination folded into a tiny forgotten scrap of paper in the back of my car ashtray. Perplexed, I considered my plight. I would have to work on my edges to paradoxical experience in order to write about a topic that immediately triggered a fuzzy, altered state. In resigned contemplation I wondered, was I seeking answers to questions or was I trying to remember something I knew?

I initially embarked upon learning about paradox but came to realize I was studying a process of awareness of which paradoxical experience was one component. Like Somebody the Sailor, some things just happened and other things I actively sought but found something else.

I felt a serendipitous quality which lent a mystifying bent to the linear idea of outlining a process of paradoxical experience in order to increase awareness from an ordinary reality perspective. This is a paradox. It seemed the process I sought was one in which one was grabbed or drifted into an altered state, something happened and everything made sense. We “woke” up; perhaps only for a scintillating moment, then fell back into the known of our ordinary life.

However, sometimes we may recall lingering echoes of the experience which births new questions, as something has changed. Language becomes clumsy because it was created to communicate concepts bounded by the belief that reality is only what we identify within the boundaries of ordinary reality, what Process Work calls consensus reality. Consensus reality, often abbreviated as CR in Process Work, refers to beliefs of

what reality is as accepted by a group, culture, or humanity in general. What one person, group, or culture believes is reality may not be universally true, or it may conflict with another person, group, or culture's consensus reality. This creates a well of discord in which each side is convinced it is "right" and the other is "wrong."

### *Background Influences and Bias*

I wished to clarify for Process Work the role of paradoxical experience and how it relates to Process Work. I wished to speak to the general public, too, and explain a number of Process Work concepts in an easy to understand way. My goals were a positive, enlivening influence for me but also a bias during my research since I reflected from a particular paradigm.

I have been a student of Process Work for 13 years, a formal student for 10. My worldview is deeply influenced by the Process Work paradigm. For instance, I believe increasing one's awareness is desirable. I have a bias towards increasing conscious awareness in all of us and I am interested in ways to do that. Also, increased awareness is of core significance to Process Work. I admire and often quote Dr. Arnold (Arny) Mindell, originator and cofounder of Process Work. I once overheard a Process Work student who was rethinking how to identify his work as a therapist on a new business card, ask Mindell what he suggested. Mindell replied, "awareness facilitator", in response to the student's question.

I have tried to be aware of my biases, metacommunicate them, and use them constructively. Metacommunicate means to verbalize objectively as I consciously follow my awareness. I've woven in explanations of applicable Process Work terminology and theory throughout this thesis in the hope that a wide audience may readily follow along.

I assume that by looking at something in different ways one can develop a deeper, more profound understanding. This assumption influenced how I approached learning about my topic; it prompted me to interview individuals from diverse backgrounds, questioning each about their thoughts on paradox and awareness. I identify this assumption as a core belief of mine formed before I was introduced to Process Work. Also, my training in Process Work supported this idea as it is intrinsic to this approach. For example, Mindell's concept of deep democracy invites in all of the parts and being open to experiencing diverse viewpoints, especially opposing perspectives, which is a core teaching of Process Work's conflict resolution training. Worldwork, a global offshoot of Process Work, incorporates training in deep democracy to help resolve conflict blocks by creating opportunity for greater awareness and more holistic understanding. Worldwork offers conflict resolution training in groups both internationally and in the United States. Based on Process Work concepts and techniques, its emphasis on deep democracy encourages awareness of diversity, inwardly and outwardly, as an essential part of conflict resolution.

My interest in diverse viewpoints led me to interview people from different fields of expertise and paradigms. I chose an individual from each of the following areas I was interested in: physics, art, religion, spirituality, and psychology.

Dr. F. David Peat, physicist, researcher-teacher, and author, was my choice from the sciences, particularly physics. I asked Peat to participate after I met him in Portland, Oregon, during a lecture he gave there. He appealed to my playful side as well as my intellect. Before his lecture, I browsed his book table with a friend. We didn't notice the man wearing a large brimmed hat sitting nearby at first as there was a table attendant

available. My friend recommended one of Peat's books to begin with. The man in the hat intervened giving his own recommendation and we had a lively discussion. During this, I realized he was the author and that evening's physics lecturer. Following our interaction, I found his lecture interesting and—fun! I admired how skillfully Peat playfully metacommunicated his discomfort of his projected role as the “expert”, the one who “knows”. As the designated expert, he was a target for the most difficult physics questions and challenges the audience could conceive of during the question and answer period. He playfully ducked behind the podium as a teenager, representing a group of high school students with attendant teachers, began going down a long list of prepared questions. In addition to his humor, I admire his philosophy through reading many of his books and by his creative and holistic vision called the Pari Center in Pari, Italy. We had an email exchange later about paradox, during which I asked him if he would participate in my study to which he agreed.

Representing the arts, I asked educator Pauline Oliveros, avant-garde composer-performer and founder of Deep Listening, if she would participate. I met Oliveros when she attended a Process Work seminar in Yachats, Oregon, with her partner, Ione, an artist and spiritual leader. I invited them to lunch with myself and my friend and Process Work teacher/therapist, Claus Bargmann. We had a great time talking about music, quantum mechanics, dreaming, Process Work, and related topics. I remain intrigued by Oliveros' artistic perspectives, her fascination with quantum mechanics and how she applies that in her music, and her concept of “deep listening.”

I also feel fortunate to have met Fukushima Keido Roshi, Head Abbot of the Tofukuji Monastery in Kyoto, Japan, master calligrapher and international lecturer. I

attended his lectures when he was in Oregon several times as a guest of Drs. Arnold and Amy Mindell. I hoped to interview the Roshi for my research, representing the field of religion, for several reasons. One is that Zen Buddhism intentionally utilizes a paradoxical trigger, called a Koan, to help initiates towards a state of heightened awareness. Also, I thoroughly enjoyed the Roshi's lectures and calligraphy demonstrations. I found the Roshi's use of Zen Koans fascinating. I was pleased when he agreed to let me ask questions on paradox after his Portland, Oregon, lecture on Zen.

I asked one of my spiritual teachers, Catherine Ingram, if I could interview her regarding paradox. Ingram teaches during satsangs and she suggested I ask my questions during an upcoming satsang as others may be interested too. I have found her explanations of philosophical and spiritual concepts clear and simple to understand. Her ability to reduce seemingly impossible, paradoxical issues to a simple conclusion, many times dissolving issues entirely, is remarkable. This is resolution of paradox in action.

My admired teacher, sometimes therapist, and mentor, Dr. Arnold Mindell was my first choice to interview for my research topic. He represented the field of psychology in my research. He was supportive of my thesis topic and interested in paradox. Mindell developed original insights and techniques, which became the origination of Process Work, while working as a Jungian analyst in Zurich, Switzerland. His ideas and teachings have impacted and enriched my life. He is a Process Worker, psychologist, physicist, researcher and teacher of process-oriented psychology and conflict resolution, and a prolific author.

I selected these paradigms and these individuals because they interested me and I was generously granted access, which I greatly appreciated. Metaphorically, I was engaged in a serendipitous journey of discovery in that I followed what interested me.

## Chapter 2: The Process of Awareness

In Sartre's *Being and Nothingness*, the human race "is a creature haunted by a vision of 'completion,' " (Wikipedia, 2006). Could this process of always seeking something beyond one's reach be ultimately the most agonizing paradox for humanity? It reminds me of the Greek myth of Sisyphus, forever damned to laboriously pushing a boulder uphill only to watch it fall back just as it touches the summit. What if Sisyphus and humanity could increase awareness enough to see the dynamic of our paradoxical experiences as simply parts of something larger? We may then find freedom to make new choices.

In this study, I first focused on understanding the experience of paradox, but then realized I was studying a process of increasing awareness of which paradoxical experience was a key component. Paradoxical experience itself, viewed from my insight during my snake vision, is a potential jumping-off point from limited awareness into hyperspatial levels (i.e., space that has four or more dimensions of consciousness).

For purposes of this study, paradox is defined as a contradiction of seemingly irrefutable polarity, each side being unequivocally true in our perception. A famous quote by eminent physicist Richard Feynman gives a succinct definition of paradox:

*A paradox is not a conflict within reality. It is a conflict between reality and your feeling of what reality should be like. (as cited in Marshall & Zohar, 1997, p. 387)*

A great personal struggle arises in response to an undeniable challenge to a closely held belief of what reality is or should be like. However if we can expand our awareness beyond our phenomenological reality and be open to conflicting information, we gain perceptual space to comprehend seeing the polarities from a new perspective that was not present before. When we can do this, our struggle falls away like gossamer threads; conflicting sides of a once felt polarity may still exist, however, they no longer enmesh us. Staying with a paradoxical experience and the altering experience, then following where it leads provides a key to expanding awareness. I am defining this as a “process of awareness.” Paradoxical experience may facilitate the flow of awareness into greater dimensions of awakening consciousness.

### *Paradox*

The experience of paradox is an overlapping of consciousness in more than one dimension, which we have the awareness to notice in ordinary reality but inability to understand. For example, if I, a being of the space-time dimension, that is, a three-dimensional being using three-dimensional awareness, were to place my finger onto a two-dimensional plane (such as in the satire of *Flatland*), and come into contact with a two-dimensional being. The two-dimensional being would be confronted with something inexplicably appearing from nowhere since it has no concept of above or up in a two-dimensional plane of self-identified awareness. If the two-dimensional being contemplated this puzzling event, it might develop various theories about it without realizing the existence of a spatial dimension of reality. The two-dimensional being may never be able to grasp the concept of three-dimensions of space in order to be able to comprehend that this is a finger attached to a being functioning freely in three-



dimensions of space. But what if it did imagine something like the space of three-dimensions? After all, we three-dimensional beings think about higher dimensions. What if a two-dimensional being were to open to this paradox as it conflicted with its belief of reality and stay with the altered state that arose? It may become aware of something much more spacious than its ordinary two degree realm of experience. The entity becomes enlightened by its altering experience into an experience of three degrees of freedom. Now viewing its prior paradox from a place of greater awareness, the two-dimensional being sees how both sides are true: there are two degrees but also there are three degrees of experience, both are correct within their context and the paradox unravels, the metaphorical logjam frees up.

It requires an expansion of awareness into greater degrees of consciousness to unravel a paradox. This is not easy. The definition of paradox I use, grabs us when we become mired in a polarity caused by our belief system conflicting with something outside that belief system, which we are unable to explain away. The only way out is to expand our viewpoint and transform our belief system or to shut out the conflict, if we can and are not yet caught in the experience of paradox.

I began to notice while asking people about their paradoxical experiences, that most of us are surprisingly adept at deflecting challenges to our strongly held beliefs. We avoid the difficult experience of paradox whenever possible by using, it seems, a kind of unconscious and intangible precognitive antenna to anticipate contradictions to our beliefs. Only the strongest contradictions get through our efficient security screens. It occurred to me that this is a way many of us unconsciously harbor discriminations of all sorts, such as racism, sexism, homophobia and more, while paradoxically retaining our

self-identification as caring people. Someone with more awareness of the symptoms and effects of racism, for example, is less entangled, therefore less blinded within a belief system which justifies racist assumptions as so called 'facts', etc. It requires social privilege to be able to unconsciously avoid contradictions to our prejudices over time as our privilege shelters us from being forced to confront such beliefs. Perhaps this is how good-hearted people can simultaneously promote racist and other damaging beliefs unconsciously and void of compassion; then feel genuinely hurt, shocked, and misunderstood when accused of such. Not that everyone who harbors prejudice is unconscious about it but this occurred to me as how prejudice can be unconscious. To someone who is more aware of racist, or other deeply hurtful discriminatory behaviors, it is difficult to understand how such damaging views and the resulting behaviors could ever be even slightly unconscious. Prejudicial attitudes seem so blatant from this more aware viewpoint that such beliefs appear deliberately cruel and hateful.

It is a paradox that a paradoxical experience figuratively ties our minds into knots yet may be a vehicle to greater freedom and awareness. We mistakably believe our thinking process is awareness, rather than a limited interpreter of awareness. This begs the question of how can we access greater dimensions of nonlocal fields of the subconscious from a paradoxical state? We create space to figuratively untie the knots when we are able to alter our perception from a limited consensus view of reality to a more spacious view, which is able to be more inclusive. It seems paradoxical experience itself provides the potential impetus for this transformation. Its power is in its natural tendency to alter our normal way of perceiving, therefore freeing our awareness to flow into higher levels of consciousness; it is a doorway.

We can maintain awareness during the mind altering process of paradox as we do it all the time in tiny shifts as we navigate through daily problems in life. Yet we mostly unconsciously deny and avoid contradictions, perhaps from fear of triggering the uncontrolled experience of an altered state and the experience of not knowing. Most of us lose awareness when confronted with paradoxical experience and, as mentioned previously, gloss over it or deny it at a subconscious level. This keeps our reality static and defined by our tightly guarded belief system. By rejecting conflicting information to our belief system we experience a feeling of safety, a highly desirable state in an uncertain world. However, we make a momentous sacrifice that we either are ignorant of or not willing to contemplate.

Our consensus reality minds lock fiercely into our belief of reality. When I asked individuals if they could recall a paradox they struggled with, most were unable to name one. Those who did remember a paradoxical experience often connected it to a life transforming experience. Yet all agreed to having experienced paradoxical moments in their lives. I found this inability to recall a particular paradoxical situation puzzling and interesting in view of the simultaneous agreement of having had them. I imagine this forgetfulness is part of the survival strategy of our everyday minds and helps to maintain our sense of security in life. After all, the power of the vise grip of paradox is that it feels impossible yet it cannot be completely denied. It disturbs our identity and our way of life. This forgetfulness protects us from feeling how terrifyingly unpredictable and fragile life is. Death waits a few breaths away. Having a firm identity in a clearly defined reality feels vital for a sense of security, even though it is a myth. As Mindell once told me in conversation (2004), every problem is a paradox, even though we don't usually identify

them as such. He then gave me several examples of everyday paradox: “What shoes shall I wear today? Shall I walk across the street or not?” We rarely concern ourselves with the resolution of these types of paradox and they aren’t likely to trigger a paradoxical experience. But there are at times more problematic polarities which challenge our core personal and cultural belief systems. These contradictions bring us to our edge of what we ‘know’ with the fearsome paradoxical unknown and mysterious. Some examples of such contradictions in quantum mechanics have proved to be: “How can an electron be a particle and a wave at the same time?” “How can Schrödinger’s Cat (1983) be both alive and dead and alive or dead simultaneously?” and in Zen Koans, such as: “What is the sound of one hand clapping?”

We marginalize paradoxical experience because it is painful, agonizing. We build in automatic shutoff switches to experience paradox, even the mundane, denying the quagmire of challenging our belief system by denying the paradox, keeping our awareness boxed into familiar limitations and our feeling of security safe. Our phenomenological view of reality is a jealous master and attempts to wipe our minds clean of conflicting information. Most of us neither acknowledge nor experience the paradoxes that surround us in daily life except in rare occasions. When they happen they are often life changing. It changes us because we have challenged and expanded our concept of reality; we have grown in awareness and view our life through a new lens.

A paradoxical experience is a conflict with our concept of reality, potentially shifting who we think we are and displacing us into a terrifying unknown of a new identity and experience. Process Workers continually work with polarities and paradoxical experiences, particularly at a psychological crossroads dividing self-

identification from non self-identification. This critical point of awareness is simply called the “edge” in Process Work jargon. It is death to our everyday identity of “this is who I am” and our boundary of accepted reality. There is a terror and thrill in working on our edges because we are challenging core beliefs and opening to something so powerful it reshapes our reality.

I interviewed physicist and author, Dr. F. David Peat, asking him about paradox from a quantum physicist’s perspective. Peat told me a story (F. David Peat, e-mail message to author, September, 2004) about legendary physicist, Niels Bohr, regarding teaching quantum mechanics. “Niels Bohr said that if he found a student who nodded and didn’t look confused that meant the student didn’t really understand what Bohr was saying! If they looked puzzled and confused then they were beginning to understand.” Bohr’s comment may have come from his experience of the paradoxical nature of quantum mechanics. This befuddlement he mentioned is so critical in the process of opening to new concepts of reality, which increases awareness in many subtle ways. Students who thought or pretended they had it rationally figured out couldn’t have understood quantum mechanics. These students were unconsciously trapped within the limits of their belief systems, like most of us. Until they challenged their beliefs and concepts of reality, they were doomed to fail in their study, as the concepts of quantum mechanics are too big to grasp from a three dimensional perspective bound by consensus reality.

Bohr’s quote cogently suggests the struggle with paradoxical concepts. The willingness to not know is prerequisite to acquire greater understanding and awareness. This is also true in learning Process Work. The struggle with the unfathomable, whether

it is concepts of quantum mechanics or our personal edges, creates befuddlement and other altered states. It is uncomfortable. Emotional responses such as anger, hopelessness, and fear can arise, but altering our usual way of thinking and perceiving opens us up to greater dimensions of consciousness. It allows the knot of paradox to unravel into new perspectives. Altered states of consciousness are a sign we are on track. This is a stage in the process of awareness.

### *Reality*

As I began writing about paradox, I often made reference to “reality.” I realized I needed to clarify the definition of reality this study is based on since paradoxical experience is triggered by challenges to one’s belief of reality. I wondered, what is reality in the context of my topic and for Process Work? I asked Mindell how he would define reality from a process oriented perspective.

Mindell replied:

The Deep Democracy of terms such as “reality” is that it is the Consensual, meaning in terms of time and space and people and things, and Dreamland, meaning in the sense of imagined or dreamed experiences, and Essence, meaning it is noetic and ineffable, yet experienced as a basis to all things. (Arny Mindell, e-mail correspondence to author, August 16, 2006)

Mindell’s definition of a multidimensional reality is the core on which Process Work theory and practice is based.

As I think about reality’s multidimensional aspects, I imagine a gnarly seaman with a gravelly voice saying: “Be fearful for these be dangerous waters.” Imagination . . . is what I imagine real? Is there *really* a gnarly seaman? Consensus reality says no. Process Work says no and yes. Process Work and mainstream psychology would agree that this imaginary gnarly seaman is not real within a consensus view of ordinary reality,

however the Process Work paradigm is based on a premise of a multidimensional reality, therefore extending beyond the boundaries of ordinary space and time, and answers “yes” to the reality of Dreamland figures and Essence energies.

My imagined gnarly seaman is real in the dreaming level Mindell calls Dreamland, and potentially carries a valuable message for me, the dreamer. In Process Work, dreaming is happening all the time while we are awake or asleep. Dreamland figures are important aspects of reality and have personal as well as impersonal relevance. They are representative of qualities and energies particular to our process in the moment with which we benefit in having connection. This gnarly seaman, as my dream figure, is an aspect of mine of which I was unaware, at least until I met him during daydreaming; he is a “secondary” figure for me, using Process Work terminology. A secondary process is a part of myself I don’t identify as “me.” I want to understand the meaning behind this figure, consciously connect to qualities I don’t identify with, and unfold the figure’s qualities more clearly into consensus reality.

I imagine what it’s like to be this gnarly seaman. Seeing him in my mind’s eye, I shape my body and movements to match his, a process referred to as shape-shifting in Process Work. I hunch my back, a grimacing snarl twists my mouth, and I stretch my neck to peer around my surroundings. I move about in a skulking way while being open to my experience. As the gnarly seaman, I rasp aloud, “Be fearful for these be dangerous waters.” I notice how suspicious I feel; around every corner is a trap or other danger. I look carefully about while keeping my head down.

I pause to feel this fear as I wonder at it. I’ve been trying to ignore my nervousness of writing about such deeply philosophical topics as reality, paradox,

awareness, and consciousness. I'm shy to write about such big concepts, ideas discussed by many greater minds than mine. I notice I feel victimized that my simple vision of a snake unhinging her jaws should somehow be leading me into such dangerously deep waters. While saying that I feel victimized by such a thing sounds ludicrous, still that is felt in my "little me" world, which can feel victimized by nearly anything, apparently. It seemed interesting, fun, and harmless enough at the time I began thinking about writing about my snake vision, but now I feel as if I'm at risk of drowning as it leads me deeper and deeper. It feels especially absurd to this shy part of me that I am attempting to explain such things in a public format.

But wait, I notice another part of me that is more detached and interested to see what I write. "If I can think it," this part coolly says, "I can write about it." But I notice my head hunching down between my shoulder blades as I write this; I've become the gnarly seaman again! Here he is, now I notice him partially manifested in consensus reality through my posture.

When I notice the gnarly seaman in myself, I realize I'm scared to show contemplative parts of myself I've hidden, even from myself. I want to challenge myself to have some of the detachment of the part that says if I can imagine it, I have some kind of authority to write about it. An inner critic primly reminds me, "There will be differences of opinion regarding what I write," but that's good when I think about it, as diverse viewpoints deepen the discussion. I feel more relaxed and ready to continue.

This is working with paradoxical experience which Process Workers term "working at the edge." In my example, one polarity was my identification as a student, one who follows where others lead, writing her thesis. Ah, I inwardly hear Dr. Sara



Halprin's voice, "Seaman says don't be so confident, is it about following? Make sentence clearer and follow Seaman's process carefully." Hmmm, I was feeling confident and marginalizing my fear of possibly saying something new and controversial, the polarity to one who confidently follows where others lead, when the gnarly seaman came in. I marginalized my fear as I didn't want to admit my deep feelings about showing myself this way. This fear manifested as a gnarly seaman dream figure warning me and now again as Sara. Now, I'm afraid. I don't know what to do. Should I continue with my line of thinking? I am having a paradoxical experience in the moment. I continue but no longer confidently. Instead I feel humble. I write about ideas that interest me because it helps me think more deeply for my own learning. I grope in a darkened landscape unfamiliar to me however known to others.

Since I initially denied my fear I didn't feel the grab of a paradoxical experience. I processed the meaning, called unfolding in Process Work terminology, of the dream figure. When I felt my disavowed feelings, which were over the edge of my consensus reality identity, I was uncomfortable and I would have preferred to have swept the whole thing under the rug, or in this case, buried it at sea. But by staying with the discomfort I became aware of a vulnerable part of myself that I feel tender towards and understand in the context of my personal history. I feel more comfortable going forward. My inner atmosphere is eased.

I've noticed as I work more often on the paradoxical edges of who I think I am and with what I don't identify, that though it's still difficult, I've become braver at meeting these unknown parts of myself. It is an agonizingly breathtaking experience to

engage with any paradox, especially meeting unknown parts of one's self that conflict with one's beliefs and self-identity.

In contrast to these unknown parts, called secondary processes in Process Work, the primary process is how I identify I am (i.e., I currently identify as a student of Process Work writing a thesis). This is my primary process. Like most of us, my phenomenological view of reality is entwined with my primary process of self-identification and my implicit agreement with the consensus definition of what is real and what is not real. This identification is so powerful that, like other beliefs, it is unconsciously accepted as factual. It is the "truth," in my worldview, rather than a uniquely layered belief system which is not necessarily truth. The fixating power of one's phenomenological and polarizing beliefs of what is real and what is not real, is the crucible on which paradoxical experience is created.

### *Consciousness*

There are many definitions of consciousness, most excluding unconsciousness. I created my own definition. I considered making up a new word in hopes of reducing confusion due to diverse meanings of the word "consciousness". But in the end, I decided to capitalize the "C" when speaking of the entirety of a consciousness continuum, rather than consciousness vs. unconscious or subconscious.

The greatest defining point of Consciousness is its power of subjective experience, realized and unrealized. However, I see its underlying essence or irreducible quality as a fundamental force of nature with a dynamic tendency and the field from which life, subjective experience, and awareness arise.

This field of Consciousness includes unconsciousness, awareness, and all degrees of subjective consciousness. It includes everything. It is an infinite potential for dynamic transformation.

I imagine Consciousness' essence quality as a fundamental dimensional field into which one's awareness and dreaming has potential to flow layer by layer, collapsing into subjective experience. This flow into more subtle and expansive dimensions can be aided by the unhinging and opening ability of paradoxical experience. A more spacious awareness is possible in greater dimensions of Consciousness, lighting the way for greater subjective consciousness, something I'll refer to, using a term I've heard Catherine Ingram use numerous times, as "awakened awareness". These greater dimensions provide space for paradoxical experience to unravel when viewed from the new perspective.

We need access to greater dimensions of Consciousness for our awareness to flow to unravel paradox because paradox is too tightly knotted. Polarity is a compression too "big" for our ordinary consensus reality perspective to hold because one pole exists in a greater, more subtle dimension. Paradox is a kind of logjam entangling the flow of awareness, such as when our subjective experience of reality conflicts with a more infinite reality we haven't yet experienced in consensus reality. I imagine our consensus reality concept of self unravels soon beyond the dimensions of time and space and transforms into a flow of dynamic being, even if paradoxical experience is possible at any level.

According to Jay Tolson (2006), philosopher Philip Clayton of Claremont Graduate University calls the mind (subjective consciousness) "an emergent property, a

complex system that is more than the sum of its parts and that has effects on the systems that support it” (p. 62). Tolson says, according to Clayton, “its unique ability (is) to represent, know, and interpret the objects of its own awareness, an ability that makes it possible for a human being to make decisions and initiate actions . . .” (p. 62).

Neuroscience has outlined what it calls a “quale” in its search to explain consciousness. Tolson goes on to say that Dr. Gerald Edelman, founder and director of the Neurosciences Institute, says the binding together of the neuronal activities of maps associated with, say, the perception of an object and those associated with, say, memory, yields an integrated yet highly differentiated experience: a “scene” of primary consciousness that researchers call a quale. “We evolved structures that invented language,” Edelman says. Yet once humans acquired syntax, Edelman adds, “all bets are off”. Biology, he [Edelman] seems to suggest, can take us only so far in understanding the symbol-using mind. “It’s not totally reductive,” he says. (Tolson, 2006, p. 60).

I find Tolson’s observation that the mind is not reductive unsurprising. Like the process of awareness and alchemy’s perceptive theory that melding two opposites can create a new thing different from either of the opposites, one’s subjective consciousness also is more than its parts. It is beyond the concept of parts.

### *Awareness*

Mindell defines awareness and aspects of awareness in many ways throughout his books and lectures. I use Mindell’s following definition for awareness, “the power that gives us ongoing access to new states of consciousness and as yet unborn parts of ourselves and the world” (Revar, n.d., ref. 11-73). My dreaming imagines this power of awareness as a fluid ebb and flow within varying degrees and dimensions of this vast

fundamental Consciousness. The degree to which we are conscious, as in self-aware, depends upon both the degree and dimension of Consciousness in which we are aware at the moment.

The higher the dimensions of Consciousness we are able to perceive, reflect, and be conscious in, the more space there is around polarities. Quantum levels of Consciousness are able to hold conflicting poles of paradox because they have greater dimensional size for contradictions to simultaneously be held as simply parts of a larger whole. From the Zen Buddhist paradigm, Fukushima Roshi (2001) succinctly explained, during a Process Work lecture, “Nonduality includes duality.”

Catherine Ingram (interview by author, 2004), spiritual teacher and author said,

Many things that look like polarities in life are actually a whole. So when you look at it from another vantage point it just looks like a whole cloth with different components that seemingly contradict each other but actually in reality don't.

Possibly awareness can flow through dimensions of Consciousness to an infinite degree. I question if there is a limit to the possible expansion of awareness. What depth of Consciousness we are able to perceive and reflect in varies individually as well as moment-to-moment. Even someone so-called enlightened has comings and goings of awareness through freer and more restrictive dimensions of Consciousness. Continuing with the metaphor of light, our awareness may be likened to a fluctuating light bulb, dimming and brightening. Our awareness dims as we are caught in our restrictive phenomenological reality, and brightens as we are able to open up to other possibilities. Someone enlightened may be able to use their awareness through greater dimensions of Consciousness than the average person. It seems some people have an awareness baseline which is rooted in higher dimensions of Consciousness than others. Our individual

baseline of awareness may increase by noticing and working with paradox and opening up to experience the polarity of the conflict, relaxing and staying with it, and dropping down to a deeper, more spacious level. However, all of us access higher dimensions of Consciousness from time to time. Whether through dreaming, effort, or when we spontaneously experience “Aha!” a flash of insight, we at times perceive through the lens of greater awareness.

This experience of “Aha!” excites us as something becomes clear that we didn’t know before. Perhaps this is related to how we learn. I imagine we have ongoing tiny aha’s, little leaps of expansion of awareness triggered by tiny paradoxes we barely notice most of the time, rather than a smooth, linear increase of knowledge. Can we intentionally trigger flashes of insight by looking for and working with our individual paradoxes? I think we can.

Perceiving our ordinary reality contradictions from quantum levels of Consciousness sees them as parts of a greater connectedness, many times referred to as wholeness. This view of wholeness cannot be comprehended from an ordinary consensus reality viewpoint because it is simply too big. Gaining access to comprehending greater wholeness comes from awareness in greater dimensions of Consciousness.

When I speak of a greater awareness in this study, I refer to the power to access a degree of Consciousness spaciously adequate to perceive a paradox as being parts of a greater whole. Perhaps it is possible to experience paradox in any dimension of experience as a conflict emerges with perceived reality. Anytime awareness is blocked, a paradox is there and it is a potential catalyst into an experience of awareness in greater Consciousness.

## Chapter 3: Paradoxical Experience and Altered States

*I almost can't stand it. I don't even know what "it" is. It would be a relief to jump out of my skin, anything, just get away. Something's stuck in my chest, it isn't loosening. I can't stay with this, I have to let it go, I have to detach from it. But if I don't stay with it, how can I write about it, how can I know something will transform? How can I casually write about something as agonizing as paradoxical experience; no, I want to get into it. I will process the feeling. I have to DO something, I can't just hold it. I feel like I'll explode. I feel hopeless, screamingly unable to do this. Okay, explode. Phew; damn, I "exploded." I escaped. I didn't hold it and relax into it. Still, I'm confused. What happened? What am I missing? Oh, something felt stuck, is it secondary? Yes. This sticking to something difficult is my dilemma with this topic, or one of my dilemmas. My tendency is to detach; my vision said stick to the dilemma, relax, open, and it will transform you. Perhaps I should process the stuck feeling, but then is that conflicting with sticking with the dilemma? Is this a sneaky way to detach again? Perhaps through dreaming . . . isn't that what Arny said to me? What did he mean? I feel stupid, and lazy. Cripes, I found a paradox in my paradox. Was that an "aha"? Are there mild "aha's"? Hmm. (Excerpt of a paradoxical moment while thinking about paradox.)*

To metaphorically unhinge the jaws of the snake's mouth, the jaws symbolic of the limits of perceiving through a three dimensional consciousness, our locked perception must be unhinged, which paradox can initiate by shifting us from our ordinary identity to new experiences through altering our ordinary state of awareness.

Altered states of varying intensity happen to us all the time. When our normal identification is confused, we are in an altered state. If intense enough, our confidence disappears as we realize we don't understand what is happening. The muscles of our awareness may be working but we don't know how to process what we perceive. We are not able to identify what our awareness is illuminating because it's outside our "known" boundaries of reality. It's a muddle. We are caught in the power of paradox by glimpsing greater possibilities while not able to accept what our awareness shows us to be true. This difficult state is potentially very open if we slip our grip on our old beliefs. If we alter our ordinary state of perception and identification we have the possibility of functioning with awareness in more spacious dimensions of Consciousness than before.

Apparently others can alter our state of awareness for us, too. For example, Dr. Milton H. Erickson (Haley, 1973) developed a therapy method of direct communication with the nonverbal self by using client-specific paradoxical language which the rational mind couldn't follow and deflect. As I understand it, he used imagery driven language which initiated altered states in his clients, allowing them to bypass their usual blocks and paradoxes in ordinary reality. He worked like a shaman in that he did the healing work for his clients; luring them into altered states and redefining their constrictive reality for them into a healthier, more wholesome one.



*Schrödinger's Cat Paradox*

Altered states of consciousness, often experienced as an emotion, are a vital part of paradoxical experience. We must alter our ordinary state of mind in order to shift into a new awareness. Simply writing about paradox stirs a tendency in me to write in paradoxical sentences. Such contradictory sentences have a trancelike nature which lap at the edge of altered states. If we read them through the lens of a linear rationality they may seem incomplete, sometimes absurd and nonsensical. But if we allow the altering of our perception into these other states of awareness we may enjoy the experience without needing to make it rational. We may gain insights.

Physicist F. David Peat sent me the following possible solutions posed by different physicists to a paradox that Schrödinger (1935) clarified in a story about a cat in a “what if” scenario to expose a paradox in quantum theory (F. David Peat, e-mail correspondence to author, 2004). If you would like to experiment with paradoxical experience, consider the famous Cat Paradox and read the listed possible solutions.

First, Peat laid out the background issue:

Schrödinger's equation allows for a number of solutions—similar things happen in our world but generally we chose one solution to be realistic. The problem with quantum theory, unlike our large scale work, is that it is what is called a linear theory. This means that two or more solutions can be combined together: There could be solution A and solution B, but this means you can also have 50% A (and 50% B) as a valid solution, or 1% A and 99% B. In other words, there are an infinite number of possible solutions. On the other hand when we make a measurement we only get one outcome. So the question, or the paradox, is how come we only see one outcome when the mathematics of the theory expresses an infinite number of possibilities? This is called “the collapse of the wave function.”

Before I continue with Peat's synopses of physicists' possible solutions to the above paradox, here is a brief version of the story about the cat that has kept physicists busy for over 70 years. Schrödinger proposed “what if” a cat was put in a box in which

there was a live radioactive particle? Now radioactive decay of an individual atom is unpredictable, no one knows why, when, or which will decay, only that about half will decay in an hour time period. So after an hour, in consensus reality, the cat should either be alive or dead, it has a 50% chance either way, right? But quantum theory says the cat can be *both* alive and dead, at the same time, which causes great perplexity.

Dead and alive, dead, or alive, these are all potentials in quantum mechanics. In consensus reality the cat is only *either* dead or alive when an influence, such as someone opening the box, looks at the cat. The observer collapses the wave function into only one of two choices, as far as we can tell. The math works out that the cat can be both alive and dead at the same time but it seems impossible because we don't recognize the existence of simultaneously dead and alive cats in ordinary reality.

This is an exercise of what it may be like to wrestle with a paradox from quantum theory:

1. Try holding the paradox of having worked long hours on the math and it is undeniable that the cat can be simultaneously dead and alive. But you know from your real life experience that a cat can only be either alive or dead.
2. Try to hold the dilemma in your mind. This means to keep the contradiction together without trying to get rid of one side. Allow all possibilities to mingle.
3. Let your awareness drop down, go deep, relax, and watch whatever arises. Give yourself time to experience the dilemma, the altered state and a new idea. Let yourself fall; let go, relax into whatever comes to you.
4. Did you have an insight? And do you have a sense of the struggle with paradox?

Now continue reading to see what famous physicists came up with while remembering what came to you too. Peat writes that several possible solutions have been posed:

1. Bohr—the mathematics is clear, we become confused when we try to talk about it because the language we use evolved in our large scale world and therefore we import concepts such as causality, space, time, etcetera, into the quantum world where they don't fit. The result is confusion.
2. Heisenberg—The mathematical solutions do not correspond to real things in the world. They are just “potentialities,” whereas the result of a measurement is an “actuality.”
3. Von Neuman's “cut.” Quantum theory applies at atomic scales but not at the large scale. As soon as a quantum object interacts with a large scale object—(i.e., a cat)—the theory breaks down. (There are various other versions of this theory.)
4. Wigner's idea. He claims that there really are superposed states in the world but that when the human observer enters his or her consciousness “collapses” all those linear combinations into one. (A variation of this is “Wigner's Friend.” This asserts that the human being who observes the quantum measurement—cat—actually enters a linear combination of brain states—some connected to live cats, others to dead cats. But a “friend” observes the observer and his/her consciousness causes the observer's brain states to collapse into only one.

5. Multiple Universes. At the moment of observation the universe splits into multiple but noninteracting parallel universes. In some the cat is alive, in other's dead. (This sounds like a totally crazy idea but physicists happen to like it. The problem is: What happened at the Big Bang? The general idea was it started with a quantum fluctuation—but that would involve a linear combination of many different states. But if there was nothing to observe this—no external observer—then how did they collapse into one single outcome? Answer—the universe split into multiple universes. We just happen to live in the one that gave birth to stars, planets, and consciousness.)
6. Bohm's Interpretation. There is only one single outcome and not a linear combination of possibilities. These outcomes are determined by what is called "The Quantum Potential," which expresses all the information about the experimental conditions. Quantum theory looks probabilistic because the quantum potential is so complex that the smallest fluctuation in the environment can produce different outcomes—a live cat, or a dead cat. But the cat is always *either* alive *or* dead. (Bohm speaks of the quantum potential as being "active information," quantum particles can "read" this information, so Bohm asserts that they have a sort of "proto mind," so that mind and matter are not distinct but have been copresent from the beginning.

*What do you think?*

Some scientists, like William Bragg (Marshall & Zohar, 1997, p. 386), have spoken humorously about the paradoxical nature of quantum physics: "Light seems to

behave like a wave on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays and like a particle on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays.”

Peat emailed me a separate note about Niels Bohr, who seemed to have humorously reframed Bragg's quote: “Niels Bohr used to say he worked out theories on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays and proved them wrong on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays” (F. David Peat, Paradox, e-mail message to author, November, 2003).

Quantum mechanics brought irresolvable paradox to modern science, much to scientists' dismay (e.g., Albert Einstein's continued disbelief, illustrated by his famous remark that God does not play dice with the universe), but scientists are now more accepting of the irreconcilable paradoxes of quantum mechanics. Professor Stephen Hawking (n.d.) lectured more recently “...it seems Einstein was doubly wrong when he said, God does not play dice, because not only does God definitely play dice but He sometimes confuses us by throwing them where they can't be seen.” The paradox in quantum mechanics was first made explicit by Erwin Schrödinger in 1935. The infinite paradoxes of quantum mechanics continue making its study a continually paradoxical experience.

### *Alchemy*

Humanity's struggle with paradox is since our murky beginnings. Alchemists were enthralled with the mysterious power of paradox to go beyond the sum of the original polarity to birth something new. They secretly experimented, with hair-raising fearlessness and sometimes at the cost of life, on inner and outer polarities intentionally trying to synergize a meld of polarities into transformation. The transformation was usually referred to as turning lead into gold and often taken literally. Alchemy's tenacious

relationship with paradox is fascinating. Theoretically, following the process of awareness I have presented, an alchemist integrating paradox may grab and hold the Union and the Negro states, releasing herself into that polarity and staying with the altered states that come up, relaxing into them, until a new awareness arises.

*Altered States and Conflict Resolution*

The following story was told by Pliny the Elder (C.E. 23-79) (Delahunt, n.d.) Roman scholar and naturalist, about the artist Protegenes. Becoming frustrated with his efforts to paint a dog foaming at the mouth, Protegenes “finally fell into a rage with his art . . . and dashed a sponge against the place in the picture that offended him . . . and chance produced the effect of nature in the picture!”

Protegenes unintentionally followed a process of awareness. He became caught in a paradoxical situation: he identified as an accomplished artist yet he could not create the desired artistic effect. He stayed with the impossible situation until he unconsciously dropped his primary identity as an artist, fell into an altered state, rage, and became the mad dog. Protegenes, the artist, disappeared. The mad, foaming-mouthed “dog” completed the desired effect in the painting, not the artist Protegenes.

From a process viewpoint, Protegenes unconsciously stepped into his secondary or less known self, the mad dog, which though still secondary, momentarily became more primary. As the dog he was free to attack the painting out of fury, no longer concerned with being an artist. His artist identity was forgotten during that moment. Because the shift was unconscious, he became the mad dog without a metacommunicator (i.e., outer observer or fair witness), and so was unable to notice himself being the mad dog. Without a metacommunicator, we unconsciously become enmeshed in the altered state of a role

process that dovetails into our psyche. We act out the energy of these roles in an unconscious way that can be harmful to ourselves and others; perhaps later to our own puzzlement. In the story about Protegenes, the result is humorous but being unconsciously caught up in a powerful role dynamic can be destructive because we did not identify with the role we stepped into. We don't know who we are in that moment as who we are conflicts with our accepted self-identification, "I'm not like that! I would never do that!"

Part of Process Work training is developing and strengthening an inner metacommunicator so we are better able to maintain our awareness during intense moments while working as a therapist or facilitator. We practice this by consciously choosing our more secondary roles, which we may notice by feeling an attraction or aversion to someone or thing. We try to consciously speak and act from that less familiar role to get to know it more deeply. By doing this we are freer to transform the role's energy, ourselves, and the field; we become open to the possibility that we are many roles.

Protegenes, if trained in Process Work, may have recognized the troublesome mad dog in his painting as a secondary figure. He could have chosen to shape-shift into the raving dog while maintaining his awareness of what was happening. I imagine how that may have unfolded. Protegenes may have intentionally sought something to bite as the foamed-mouthed dog, running about his studio biting things, maybe the canvas, a stand, anything. Perhaps if he did that he would have noticed how satisfying it was to sink his teeth into things. He could have suddenly realized he didn't want to create art from his rational analytical mind; he wanted to have an intense, passionate creative

connection to art, he wanted to sink his teeth deeply into it. By working on his secondary figure, the dog, with his awareness he could have gained an insight that would have benefited him and his art for life.

By consciously stepping into roles we don't identify with, we are immediately entering the altered state of a new experience. As a practice in conflict work, both internal conflict and in the world, process workers deliberately alter their perception into disturbing and lesser known processes, or identities, to process the edge where the known and unknown meet, which is at the point of paradox, to better understand and use the power of the energy behind the role in a beneficial way. By metacommunicating what is happening, those outside can follow and interact with the role and help transform it. When we are able to better understand, at an experiential level, these more secondary parts of ourselves, we increase our understanding of ourselves, others, and the world. We are better able to see both sides of polarities and be useful to the process as a whole. This is following a process of awareness.

This awareness practice is difficult because it is paradoxical to step into a secondary identity and experience that while maintaining awareness. It is a paradox to consciously be in a role we consider disturbing and troublesome and so retaining awareness outside that role. Yet we become more compassionate human beings when we better understand the polarities of our inner and outer conflicts. This better understanding is from awareness functioning perceptively in greater dimensions of Consciousness.

### *Altered and Extreme States*

Hyperspatial states of awareness create access to levels of consciousness most of us are unused to and in which we feel mildly to strongly disoriented. To rephrase what I



wrote earlier, when we trigger the transformation to expand awareness through a paradoxical experience, we may feel a befuddlement, an altered state of consciousness. There may be a feeling of physical disorientation, even physical imbalance, along with a mental confusion in which nothing makes sense. If you try this, the experience is uncomfortable. However, if you are able to maintain enough awareness to self-direct yourself, then experiment staying with the disorienting experience and keep noticing whatever arises.

If the experience feels too strong to work on alone, then drop it and seek expert guidance for support if you wish to pursue the process further. Strong paradoxical experience could trigger symptoms creating slightly disoriented to extremely altered states. If you are unable to maintain at least some objective awareness in such a dynamic, then it won't be helpful for you to try and shift the experience on your own. An ability to maintain some awareness is critical to follow the process of awareness I'm writing about.

Altered states are the sensation of our perception metaphorically unhinging into an unknown dimension. It takes a moment to gain our balance; sometimes we become lost and lose connection with all awareness. Then we may simply wake up back in our comfortable ordinary reality.

In an extreme situation some people may not wake up in consensus reality after becoming lost in an altered experience, but may stay stuck in the 'gears', so to speak, unable to unravel the paradox they are caught in or return to their consensus reality identity. If sustained over a long period, the altered state becomes the norm. There can be many different influences and variations of this grindingly unfinished process. It could also be the result of a double-bind in which they are unable to be open to either polarity,

so choose neither and instead live in an extremely altered state in which they may find power, a sense of freedom, and escape from the more painful consensus reality choices.

The stuck process could have the quality of a spiritual emergency. Due to an unprepared hyperspatial leap into experiencing awareness in higher dimensions of consciousness while still strongly identified with ordinary reality, some may not open up fully to the impetus of altered states happening to them and so become locked, unable to fall back into ordinary reality or be adequately open to integrate the leap in awareness. It is beyond the scope of this study to address these more complex dynamics in-depth but it is important to note that such struggles can happen.

### *Lucidity*

In contrast to the murky, confused, mind-numbing state when caught in a strong paradoxical experience, there is another cloudy state that is very different as it is a pre-conscious aspect of awareness. Mindell calls a particular fluidly open, aware, and cloudy altered state *lucidity* (Mindell, 2000, p. 25). When one is lucid, one is open and observant of a vast array of events, unlike one's usual state of mundane awareness in which one may be speaking on the phone while driving a car but not paying much attention to either and even less to events outside those activities. I think of lucidity as a fishing net that is woven with the field of potentialities of fundamental Consciousness, meaning the vast unconscious along with self aware consciousness. Our initial experience is a cloudy awareness, then there's a catch, something more specific flickers into our awareness. We notice something in a dreamy way, but it is quick, lightening fast so we have to be cloudy and fast to catch the dreaming message of it. When we notice something, we use our

awareness to narrow it into identification; we collapse the wave function of fundamental consciousness into subjective consciousness.

I recall different exercises Mindell introduced during his lectures in which we would begin by accessing a cloudy lucid state, soft-lidded eyes half-open, half-closed, and softly scan the environment for whatever catches one's attention. The attractant catching our attention is called a flirt in Process Work. You may want to try this while reading. We keep our attention on the flirt without identifying it in consensus reality terms and allow ourselves to go into the dreaming nature of the flirt. This cloudy openness is altering our usual state of consciousness in that it allows the dreaming mind, the unconscious, that is, other dimensions of experience we usually marginalize, to be picked up by our awareness. In the exercises we experiment with following our dreaming experience. For example, if my first impression of the flirt I picked up in my lucid state was the sun then I would unfold my experience of that particular "sun" to find the deeper personal meaning.

This can easily be a paradoxical experience, as our consensus reality minds will stubbornly try to identify the attractant in consensus reality terms (i.e., a brooch). This overwhelming tactic of our consensus reality minds marginalizes the dreaming mind, which has another experience. To remain open and aware of the dreaming behind the attractant triggers a paradoxical experience if we have also allowed ourselves to identify the attractant in consensus reality terms. For me, I frequently cave in to my curiosity and focus just enough on the attractant to identify it in ordinary reality terms, in a sense I further collapsed the wave function of potentialities of Consciousness into consensus reality.

It is a paradox to be aware of the consensus reality identification while also holding the dreaming identification I momentarily caught in the cloudy, lucid state. The brooch is also the sun, for instance. Holding both as real and not allowing the consensus mind to overpower the dreaming experience of the sun is not easy. The sun has an important message that is dreaming behind the brooch, it is the deeper thing for me. Our day to day conditioning automatically marginalizes conflicts with our consensus reality world. To resist this requires us some tenacity to hold and relax into both truths. Allow your awareness to expand enough to be able to grasp both as real but delve more deeply into the dreaming as it is less known, in this example, my dreaming is the sun. You may want to play with what flirts with you, hold it, become it, and see if you have a meaningful insight.

While altered states of consciousness may be experienced from mildly unsettling to extreme, they are by their very nature, an indication that one is making a shift and accessing realms of awareness beyond everyday identity and awareness. One is thus altering one's normal state of perception and identity. Altered states of consciousness only feel altered until they become integrated into one's primary state of consciousness.

Chapter 4: Holistic Characteristics of Greater Awareness

*Polarities*

*I am black and I am white  
I am the day and I am the night  
I am the dark and I am the light  
I am the side you would like to be  
And also the one you don't want to see  
I am Jekyll and I am Hyde  
I can decide, who I wanna be  
It's just me.  
I am cold and I am warm  
I am the sun and I am the storm  
I am strong and I am weak  
I will always find; I will always seek  
I am smooth and I am rough  
I am mild and also tough  
I am here, I am there,  
I am everywhere  
I was, I am and I will be  
I go with the eternity  
I switch through time and space  
I am always and at any place  
I am the sea and I am the earth  
I am one world and the universe  
I am the hate and I am the love  
The deepest hell and the heaven above  
I am one and the other pole  
I am the tiniest part — and — I am the whole.  
—Susanne Roessing*

Susanne Roessing's muse on polarity (Roessing, 2001, p. 6) is especially intriguing in that she came to a deeper level of awareness by grasping both poles of paradox. Thus, she came to a concept of wholeness through a poetic paradoxical process.

The arts are full of paradox. Paradox helps convey complex, nonverbal information directly, deeply inside the psyche bypassing the critically objective mind. As mentioned earlier, I enjoyed an impromptu lunch conversation with composer Pauline Oliveros, founder of Deep Listening, about quantum physics, psychology, and music. Oliveros commented that she, paradoxically, composes silence, around diverse kinds of sounds rather than composing sound. She later emailed me in response to a comment I made about referring to atomic entanglement as a concept, “Atomic entanglement is not just an idea—it is a reality” (Pauline Oliveros, email communication, 2004).

My experience of her style of juxtaposing silence with diverse sounds is it creates a dynamic listening experience that assists listeners to alter their normal state of awareness and open to new experience and relationship to sound. This nonverbal experience is one’s awareness flowing into a transcendent dimension of consciousness beyond our ability to express in consensus reality based language. Music and sound are generally accepted vehicles in which we may experience altered states. Because of this acceptance it may be less frightening to remain with our altered states of consciousness experience through music. Music can potentially assist us into entering greater dimensions of subjective experience consciousness. Even after we fall back into everyday reality the experience subtly changes and expands us.

The arts are critical to our humanity because they expand our awareness into deeper levels of subjectively experienced consciousness. We become more human, open, and conscious through the influence of the arts and through experiencing our own and other’s creativity.

*Wholeness as a Monster: A Dream Story*

Dreams are irrational, visual, and often paradoxical from our ordinary viewpoint. During the time I was intently researching paradox, studying aspects of quantum mechanics, and talking to people about their paradoxical experiences, I had the following dream. I met with Army Mindell after this dream, to discuss it and my idea of exploring paradox for my thesis. This dream reminded me of Schrödinger's Cat Paradox, which helped develop quantum mechanics theory by making the paradox in quantum mechanics apparent. It's interesting to me how paradox was engaged with in my dream. I enjoy the creativity of dream stories. I've included this dream for those who also enjoy the nonlinear teaching in stories.

*I went into a movie theater. When there I went out into the theater hallway and I noticed 3D movie displays beginning to grow and animate. One looked like a real person. I wasn't sure at first if it was a real person or not. As I watched it began to remove its arm, then a leg so I saw that it was not a real person but an advertising animated figure. It grew very large with enormous muscles and it had something dark thrown around its neck. This dark thing looked odd. It was draped around the monster's neck but was partially erect along the back of the monster's shoulders. As I gazed in awe at the giant creature I realized the odd thing around its neck and shoulders was its dead self. It wore its dead self around its neck like a stiff scarf.*

*I noticed another monster was coming to life at the other end of the hallway. It reminded me of The Hulk then seemed like The Thing. It was enormous and looking for a fight with a mighty foe. Then I realized I was standing between the Monster Who Wore Its Dead Self Like a Scarf and the Hulk-like Monster and*

*they were meant to fight each other. I looked for a place to hide. There was a slight curve in the hallway so I went to stand there since I didn't see anywhere else to hide but it wasn't much protection. The monsters saw each other. Then I noticed a small alcove with a little door inside it to my right. I hesitated as I would have to walk towards the Monster Who Wore Its Dead Self Like a Scarf to reach the door but I decided to do so in hopes of getting through the door before the two titans clashed. I hurried to the door but reached it only moments before the Monster Who Wore Its Dead Self Like a Scarf saw the door, too. I rushed through then looked back through the tiny window in the door to see the Monster Who Wore Its Dead Self Like a Scarf looking at the door seemingly curious. Oh no, he might try to come in if he sees me, I looked around to hide and saw I was in a very fancy office with a low partition wall between me and some desks. There were state of the art high tech computers and other expensive equipment in the office. No one else was there. The Monster Who Wore Its Dead Self Like a Scarf opened the little door. It squeezed through and followed me in. This surprised me and was not what I wanted to happen. I had thought the monster would be so engrossed with the pending battle that it would not have been side-tracked in this way. It looked around as it stood close to me and seemed curious about the place. It wasn't aggressive towards me. But now I was afraid the Hulk-like Monster would come in to fight this monster, wreck the place, and endanger me.*

*I strode through a gate in the low partition wall to be as far away as possible from the Monster Who Wore Its Dead Self Like a Scarf. Then I saw the Hulk-like Monster bending down to peer through the little window in the door. It*



*struggled to figure out how to get in to fight the other monster. I saw it was a dumb brute who didn't know how to open the door like the Monster Who Wore Its Dead Self Like a Scarf had done. But I knew this Hulk-like Monster would soon simply break through the wall and come in after the other monster, destroying the office and endangering me if I didn't take action now. Somewhat regretfully I pointed out the Hulk-like Monster to the Monster Who Wore Its Dead Self Like a Scarf. I regretted sending it off to fight to possible death with the brutish Hulk-like Monster. It had not been aggressive towards me or our surroundings and appeared only curious and surprisingly intelligent. Somehow it had broken free of its program. I didn't want it to be hurt but I didn't see another way I could get away from the inevitable clash. I knew as soon as they saw each other their programming to fight would take precedence and it did. The Monster Who Wore Its Dead Self Like a Scarf immediately went for the Hulk-like Monster, blasting through the wall back into the hallway.*

I woke up realizing in relief that the Monster Who Wore Its Dead Self Like a Scarf was unbeatable because it was aware of its dead self. Its dead self was a part of its wholeness—how could it ever be killed? It identified with both parts: being alive and being dead. It was both simultaneously, a paradox, like Schrödinger's paradoxical cat. Its perception was at a quantum dimension of awareness of wholeness. It consciously was its dead and living selves; it knew itself in all aspects and in all time. The Hulk-like monster was not really alive. It was only an animated program because it had no awareness of its dead self. All it knew how to do was fight, it was not self-aware.

What happens in dreams when paradox shows up? In this dream, the polarities were fixated on fighting the other; it was their “program.” In Process Work we consider all the roles of a dream to be parts of the dreamer, more and less known. Who was I in the dream? Could one of my roles be akin to awareness in ordinary experience? I went to my interview with Arny soon after and we talked about my dream as well as my prospective thesis about paradox (Arnold Mindell, interview by author, August, 2004).

Joy: So, when, um, the dropping down into essence, that’s also lucidity, right?

Arny: Umm-uh.

J: What’s the state where a person isn’t down there yet? Where all you see is the struggle?

A: That’s a dreamland or consensus reality situation. Because in dreamland you still have parts and figures and what have you, conflicting.

J: So you’re just not going deep enough yet . . .

A: You haven’t relaxed enough yet.

J: Umm-uh.

A: That’s great, actually. It’s a thesis about a central, *the* central human dilemma: Problem-solving.

J: Yeah.

A: Somebody wants to know, you’re a businesswoman, should I buy that stock now or shouldn’t I buy that stock now? Or some house or sell something, whatever. Your answer now would be no and yes. How are both right? Um-huh?

J: Yeah. It's interesting because it took me a while to recognize paradox. It's so much a part of the fabric of our everyday existence that somehow I couldn't find it.

A: What did you say it meant?

J: I had to figure out what. There are two conflicting things that seem to both be true.

A: Wonderful.

J: It makes me curious about our natural ability to drop down. What is it? How do we get nonlinear information? Where does it come from? Where does resolution come from? The knot is falling apart . . .

A: That's wonderful. Reminds me of when we saw the Roshi (Fukushima Keido).

[I lost some of the recording; we had gone on to discuss my Monster Dream] . . .

in the movie time? Aha! You can't lose in a fight. You can't lose because you already lost. The Hulk creature is consensus reality, a dumb brute; always a huge battle between just doing something or doing it with intelligence and lucidity. Go shopping but why shop? Do it, don't do it.

J: (makes a face)

A: Oh, you think you don't have that one? Sure you do. That's why you laugh all the time. The Dead Self . . . is the part that's detached from what you're doing.

So, that's good. They're both there. Let them fight. Notice the struggle. Unhinge your mind, you'll drop down. Action will automatically happen. That's the resolution to paradox: to dream your way into things.

Mindell's great skill in following the process brought out my natural inclination to use a dreaming style to resolve paradox, rather than him making this a blanket statement for everyone to follow. My style to hold and transcend polarities may in the moment be to dream into them, someone else's may be to wrestle with them, or to surrender, for instance.

There is the presence of wholeness in the background of waking paradoxical experience that is also present in my dream. I realize I don't know what wholeness is but for me it is an experience of being connected at a deep level. Perhaps it is an experience of all parts being connected and a part of something larger we ordinarily barely imagine. I am curious about wholeness as it seems to be a constantly evolving process.

"Go shopping but why shop?" Arny said. This reminded me of Zen Koans and Fukushima Roshi.

*Paradox, Zen Koans and Fukushima Roshi*

Fukushima Keido Roshi, Head Abbot of the Tofukuji Monastery in Kyoto, Japan, came several times to speak during Process Work seminars in Oregon at Drs. Arny and Amy Mindell's invitation. He spoke at the Process Work Center in Portland, Oregon, and at the Lion's Club in Yachats, Oregon, during the Mindells' Process Work seminars. He also demonstrated Zen calligraphy, which was wonderful to witness.

I will write something of what Fukushima Roshi said in his *The Way of Zen* lecture (2001) about the paradox of duality. However, first I'll tell the story of my paradoxical interview with him. I like telling stories, I'm smiling as I fleetingly remember my grandfather's stories and his big smile showing his loose dentures; happily this story is relevant to my topic.

When Fukushima Keido Roshi lectured at the Process Work Center in 2001, I hoped to ask him my questions about paradox afterwards. The room was crowded and I was fortunate to be able to speak with him through his interpreter. It was uncomfortable as I was on my knees since I had crawled through the crowd to reach the front and the pressure of the crowd pushed me into a low table placed in front of the Roshi. People were pressed around me, literally breathing on me in their effort to hear every word he spoke; I felt puffs of breath around my head.

I asked him about paradox and how is it integral to the Koan. He promptly gave me a Koan. I was puzzled at being given a Koan but decided I should try and answer it in hopes then he might answer my questions. I took a moment to go inside with the question and then I said something in response. He nodded. Good, that's done, I thought, and I again asked my question about paradox. He immediately gave me another Koan. I was disturbed he gave me another Koan. I wondered if I'd remember these later as I was unable to record this interaction since my battery had run out from recording his lecture. I did make notes afterwards as best I could recall. It was noisy in the room so I doubt the recording would have been discernable, but I wish I had been able to record it. I felt into the question for a moment then gave an answer to that Koan too, again hoping if I got past this one I could get a useful answer to my questions! By this time I was being pushed sideways by the weight of the crowd and the low table was tipping over, trapping my legs. I could barely remain in a semi-upright sitting position. I don't know if the press of the crowd or the fear of having to answer another Koan was more stressful but in spite of my growing concerns, I noticed the Roshi didn't seem affected by the chaos or concerned I was taking so much of his time.

I felt panicked. Other people wanted to ask questions and I was nervous about the amount of time the Roshi was spending on me. I felt unable to get an answer I understood from him. It was overwhelming. I didn't know whether my answers were relevant to anything he was asking me. He then asked me a third Koan, speaking Japanese as before. I was by now shaken by the situation and I blurted out an answer quickly before it was translated even though I don't speak Japanese. I don't recall what I said but somehow I felt I knew what was asked. He looked surprised but no more than I. I don't know if his surprise was at my (hoped for) brilliance or perhaps my response to his question was simply surprising. Frightened, I hurriedly thanked him and crawled away before he replied from his vast storehouse of Koans. I was unable to endure another suffocating moment or field another Koan.

This was my attempt to interview Fukushima Keido Roshi on paradox. It was hopeless and perfect. It was paradoxical. What did I learn? I learned to be ready to be in the experience rather than only talk about it; it's all real and happening now. If I get another chance to speak with him, I'd like to take time to simply enjoy it all, however it is. Even if I were racing down a hill chased by a swarm of bees, it would be perfect.

Fukushima Roshi (2001) said Zen teaches to try to transcend dualistic discrimination, and that "The fundamental dualistic discrimination in the world is the one between self and the other." I understand this as the most fundamental paradox, very exciting. When I perceive myself as separate from the other—that other could be a rock, a person, a mountain, anything I don't identify as myself—I am polarized; I am presented with a potentially paradoxical experience whether I am aware of that or not. Simply practicing awareness of this paradox increases awareness.

Fukushima Roshi (2001) continued by instructing how to resolve this basic paradox. “But transcending dualistic discrimination doesn’t mean to forget them. When it is hot, we should adapt to the heat. When it is cold, we should adapt to the cold,” he explained. “Transcending dualism is the teaching of adapting to dualistic differences in freedom. And the second fundamental Koan question, ‘What is the sound of one hand clapping?’ is a typical way to illustrate this point.”

I love that Fukushima Roshi used a Koan to explain how to transcend dualism to a lay audience. I am heartened by his faith of an innate ability in humankind to increase one’s awareness, which Process Work shares as well. Adapting to dualistic differences means after we alter our primary fixed state of self identification and allow our awareness to flow into a greater dimension of consciousness, there is space to perceive polarities as simply parts of a greater whole. Dualities don’t vanish; they simply have space to coexist, whereas before they conflicted and it seemed we had to choose one or the other.

Many polarities seen through greater dimensions of awareness still exist but are experienced as part of a larger wholeness, rather than a one or the other choice, as we can see more of the landscape. The Zen method of altering our primary identification of reality is through the experience of a Koan. This triggers a paradoxical experience, which if embraced, will alter our normal everyday perception of there being an “other,” by allowing us to drop down, relax, and release us into a hyperspace of conscious awareness in which we no longer identify with one side of a polarity but have “space” to see all sides. Our degree of awareness *is* our degree of freedom.

When we experience greater awareness it is easier to regain access to it again. I imagine there is an awareness “pathway” of sorts that is roughed in when we extend our

awareness into greater degrees of consciousness. This can be developed further, eventually creating a new baseline of awareness. Fukushima Roshi (2001) supports this idea:

The 1700 traditional Koan questions all teach transcending dualism as their main point. If one has actually experienced transcending dualism then it is easy to give a good answer.

Once you've experienced the state of no ego you have that experience always. Still you must continue to deepen that experience. The two fundamental Koans are for just that. They are for deepening the state of no ego.

I think of Fukushima Roshi's work as an awareness initiator. The Roshi stays alert for opportunities to increase awareness in people by giving them a precisely placed Koan. The Koan potentially acts as a key to alter an ordinary perspective into greater awareness and subsequent transformation into understanding the dualities of life from a less one sided perspective, including love and enlightenment, of which there are perhaps infinite levels. This is not an easy job since most of us resist such a transformation as if it were the worse plague on the planet. We fear the unknown. In my childhood myth, the moment of entering the unknown is the moment of grabbing for the apple after I've let go of the branch.

I have not studied Buddhism so it feels risky for me to comment on it. I do as part of my own learning and realizing my thoughts at any moment are in constant flux. I surmise the state of no ego he refers to is a state of awareness in a dimension of consciousness great enough to allow us space to see our ordinary selves as simply one part of the landscape. Our universe is no longer identified and confined to "me" versus "other than me." We now have awareness to observe the "me" and the "other than me" while seeing how all parts are one; how all are included in a greater wholeness.



*Catherine Ingram on Social Activism and Wholeness*

Catherine Ingram is a spiritual teacher and author (1990, 2003). She leads Dharma Dialogues, a public event inquiry into the nature of awareness. Catherine co founded the Insight Meditation Society in Barre, Massachusetts (1976) and the Unrepresented Nations and Peoples Organization (UNPO) in The Hague, Netherlands (1991). I asked if I could interview her about paradox which she made time for during a Dharma Dialogues satsang in Portland, Oregon (Catherine Ingram, interview by author, July, 2004, digital audio recording). This is an excerpt from that interview.

J: Catherine, do you recall a special paradox in your life?

C: Do I recall a special paradox? You mean . . . probably every day I'm noticing paradox. But my experience with paradox is it's only a paradox if you think about it. And many things that look like polarities in life are actually part of a whole. So when you look at it from another vantage point it just looks like a whole cloth with different components that seemingly contradict each other but actually in reality don't. Here's a paradox that is occurring to me as we're speaking and I touched on it at the beginning of this evening. That, in effect, we're looking at reality and saying yes to it. We're saying yes, okay, as it is. Bring it on as it is, right? And, or, even surrender to it, as it is. At the same time it's a kind of paradox that there's a well-wishing for it to get better (laughter)! You know? It's like . . . I often quote this, I put it in my book [*Passionate Presence*] . . . a Zen Master, who said, "Although it's all perfect there's still room for improvement." That's a paradox! "It's perfect and there's room for improvement." So one lives with that and it becomes not a paradox as you live with it. You are surrendered. You are saying okay, yes, however it plays out. I'm going to say yes to it because

it is too painful to resist it. At the same time do I want to tweak it certain ways, would I like to see it tweaked certain ways? You know? To have us be more gentle with each other on this planet, to save what's left of the beauty of nature? To, ah, get out of the medieval mind state that many people are living in and killing each other for? Yes!

J: How do you do that? How do you just surrender to it? How do you live with it?

C: Because the alternative is too painful (pause). The alternative is to a sort of being braced, you know, with your feet in the sand and you're just saying, "No, no, no, no . . ." right? And you're fighting reality. It's just too painful (to live that way). And also, I don't know how it's all supposed to turn out. I mean from this vantage point I have these preferences, right? But I can't stand on them and say this is how it's supposed to go, obviously. So that's a kind of paradox that when you're constantly giving over your acts, all of your acts, to existence with your best intentions. All of the offerings of your soul, you could say. You're offering it with your best intentions, with your greatest visions. But maybe your visions aren't, you know, the greatest vision for all. Who knows? But you just do it and do your best. And the more centered you are in this experience of Presence the more clear your vision is, but it's not perfect, there's no foresight that's perfect.

J: Do you have a sense of the tension of the paradox itself?

C: I don't. I don't have any tension around that particular paradox. Umm, I have a clear sense. But, you know, I watch myself and my various friends and all the people doing good works in the world, and so on. I watch what's going on and I

root for us all. I also hold in my heart in equal measure surrender to however it plays out. And that's a kind of sanctuary also.

You know it's like T. S. Elliot said, "Be still and wait without hope because hope may be for the wrong thing" (Four quartets: 2 East Coker, 1940). But I have revised it (laugh), to "Be still and wait without hope." Now I don't mean to sit in hopelessness. But not to have a particular picture of your hopeful thing that's sitting out there in the future. Because, if you have that picture, and the way that events are unfolding they're not going to even come close, right? You're going to feel more and more frustrated and what that does is sap your strength. It makes you yet another body on the pile of suffering that someone else is going to have to deal with and take care of . . . therapeutize . . . and makes you ineffective, not only out in the world, but for yourself. So it's . . . not recommended.

I know so many activists, so many activists who have completely burned out. What have they burned out on? They're not burned out on the action; they're burned out on their own anger. That's what drains them. They burn out because you can't sustain anger. Anger is a short term burst of energy. You'll see certain movements flare up, you know, either politically or socially. They'll flare up and they'll have a big thrust, a big start-up engine out of anger, out of outrage. But it is completely unsustainable. It burns everybody out.

J: And that's connected to this idea of the outcome image? You have of a picture of how you want the outcome?

C: Yes, if you have attachment to an outcome where you're sure how the world should be. Which is what we see going on actually on the world stage: A lot of

people with very strong opinions about how the world and the rest of the world, not only themselves, should be. And they're willing to fight and die for these opinions and belief systems. It's complete chaos. It produces extraordinary violence and it wipes everybody out. It's so far out of balance. So yes, that's exactly what I'm saying. When you have a picture out there of how it all should turn out and be and that's what's driving you, right? And your ideology is all important. Well, that leads to violence in different forms. But there's an alternative. I'm not saying that complete passivity is recommended either. I don't see that either.

There's a possibility of passionate engagement that is full of love, which is full of sitting together in the center of presence. That is doing it because you see everybody as family. Your motivation is for the greater good. That's your actual bottom-line motivation. You're looking at every . . . at every nuance that you can see, that you are capable of seeing in your awareness and you're assessing it all very clearly. By saying what is the greater good, not what is the allegiance to my belief system, not what is the best thing for me and my family or my country but what actually is the greatest good for all, because you are sitting in presence that is experiencing it that way. And that is much more energized. That's why people who have that kind of dedication and motivation they do . . . they do activism for decades. They just go on and on and on. Gandhi just went on for decades and decades. Caesar Chavez, you know he died probably as a result of all the fasting he'd done but he was a love warrior for decades, and many others who are living examples in our time who didn't burn out. They not only didn't burn out, they

were radiant, really radiant. They were having lives that were full of light and joy even despite all the sorrow that they had to be witness to. That's what I'm saying. The strength of love is the strength to look at what's truly difficult and quite despicable, really, in this world.

Catherine Ingram recommends surrendering to paradoxical experience. This means being open to relaxing into the experience. When we relax into chaos, confusion, however paradox is experienced, then these altered states eventually lead to a new awareness, a greater opening up. Catherine speaks of the immense power of feeling and having a loving attitude. Her recommendation is to be lovingly open to the unknown while acknowledging the forever evolving known. Catherine brings in wholeness as a loving attitude that perceives everyone as family, open and surrendered to even the horrendous while actively working in the most universally beneficial way we know.

It seems the thread of paradox is the same whatever its texture. The thread is this: opening to the polarities in life can expand our awareness to a level in which diverse polarities may be perceived on their own and without the angst of paradox. All conflicts are simply parts of a greater whole.

## Chapter 5: Paradox and Process Work

*Process work is a multicultural, multileveled awareness practice. Depending upon the individuals and group consensus, as well as the historical moment, process work is an evolving, transdisciplinary approach supporting individuals, relationships and organizations to discover themselves, follow nature and thereby resolve inner, relationship, world and personal body issues. (Arnold Mindell, n.d.)*

Process Work views the tension of paradox as a great potential for transformation. Parts of the crux of this tension are called edges in Process Work theory and practice. Working with our edges is working at the point of transition between the known and unknown; this is working with paradoxical experience. Process Work has developed a method to help maintain awareness at these edges inside paradoxical experience by noticing what comes up both internally and outwardly. Process Work techniques, such as picking up the energy of dreaming figures of internal critics, etc., and external disturbing processes, can help process paradoxical experience at the edge and create new insights due to an expansion of awareness.

There are many paradoxes in Process Work, too. For instance, Process Work highly values dreaming: It is a paradox to value dreaming which consensus reality marginalizes. As an example, how many times have you woken up and thought about a dream you then promptly forgot? Our dreaming while we are awake and going about

daily life is even more marginalized. To value one's dreaming self during the experience of disavowal is a paradox and requires a metaperspective—in other words, who is it who values it?

A belief is something accepted as authoritative by someone, group, or school. We all hold beliefs, some we know we have but many we don't. Process Work holds a belief in process. Process is the opposite of static, process is a flow; its range is multidimensional, including consensus reality. We are multidimensional beings in constant process; this means we can consciously follow our awareness as a multidimensional being by not identifying with a "me" other than one which is in constant flux. This requires the development of a metaperspective. A metaperspective is regarded as a critical skill for Process Work therapists. Process Work training programs require prospective graduates develop a form of metaperspective, called a metacommunicator, to be able to speak about what is happening while it is happening.

Process Work is like individuals in that it also functions from its beliefs. Process Work believes that people can change and that people will make changes when connected to their experience. Process Work believes people are unlikely to change if told or advised to change without something connecting them to change; they must have experience relevant to their personal myth to instigate change.

Process Work identifies people as being more than a physical body as well as existing simultaneously in consensus reality as well as other dimensions of experience. Our experience in less conscious hyperspatial dimensions is as mostly unidentified and unaware energies which take forms and personalities particular to our personal mythology and history when perceived from our consensus reality perspective. We

interact with these split off, unidentified energies in the outer forms of what we identify as people, animals, things; events such as war and perhaps, even the weather. All are perceived as outside of our personal primary identity. We also interact with these energies internally as so-called inner demons and critics, mother and father figures, etcetera, and in dreams, fantasies, body symptoms, feelings, internal atmosphere, and more. Process Work encourages us to identify experientially with these myriad roles in order to access and integrate the energies behind the figures, so as to empower our everyday lives.

Process Workers use process oriented awareness, a hyperspatial tool, which helps transform static three-dimensional identities into becoming more fluid. This conscious connection to hyperspatial energies acknowledges participation in whatever is happening. Repressed energy often reveals itself as something we need in our life to live a fuller, more whole life. Unfolded marginalized parts are rarely what we expected or feared when perceived as inner or outer figures. A side-effect, so to speak, of doing this work and other activities that wrestle with paradoxical experiences on a regular basis, may be an expanded awareness in everyday life. In Process Work we begin to see processes as roles rather than concretizing them only as specific people. Our real identities are flowing processes able to take on and let go of nearly any identity momentarily. It is as if we humans have an awareness “muscle” that becomes stronger and more present the longer we use it. When our primary self-identity connects through self-awareness to our unidentified energies, the result is transformation.



I asked Arny Mindell if he recalled a personal paradoxical experience and if he would be willing to respond to a questionnaire I had created for my thesis asking about such experience. He agreed.

### *Paradoxical Questionnaire*

I constructed this questionnaire about paradoxical experience early in the beginning of this study. I've used these questions as a base for the interviews from the fields of physics, F. David Peat; religion, Zen, Fukushima Roshi; arts, Pauline Oliveros and Susanne Roessing; spirituality, Catherine Ingram; and in psychology and Process Work, Arnold (Arny) Mindell.

Here are the questions:

1. Do you recall a special paradox in your life or work? If so, please describe it.
2. Please say what you experience while remembering that paradox. Go deep inside to the root of your experience and then deeper still. Please try and describe what that is like for you? This may be a vision, a feeling, a sound, a movement, and etcetera.
3. Do you imagine your experience of paradox useful? If so, please describe how.
4. Have you had a realization, knowing, or insight while struggling with this paradoxical experience?
5. Has this paradoxical experience somehow transformed your life in some way?

The questionnaire itself is a paradox. I realized after the fact that it is nearly impossible as it requires one to be able to consciously negotiate paradoxical experience to answer the questions. I tried to use my questionnaire in my contact with each interviewee in this

study due to my initial presumption that it would provide a common ground which would be beneficial. However, the common ground was the universality of paradoxical experience, not my questionnaire.

The creation of the questionnaire was helpful for me as a framework, though not easy to bring into the actual interviews. During the process of interviewing, many of the questions were ignored or I was unable to ask all the questions. Army is the only interviewee who completed the full questionnaire. Reading his responses reminds me how I love mentally tagging along behind Army as I enjoy the new and surprising places I find myself. I was surprised by Army's responses and in them I discovered new questions and insights.

I emailed five questions to Army in one email and he emailed back his responses (Army Mindell, email questionnaire interview by author, June, 2004):

J: Army, do you recall a special paradox in your life or work? If so, please describe.

A: I have always been perplexed that psychology and physics are separated academically, while we human beings are both mind and matter.

J: Please say what you experience while remembering that paradox. Go deep inside to the root of your experience and then deeper still. Please try and describe what that is like for you? This may be a vision, a feeling, a sound, a movement, and etcetera.

A: I experience the paradox of studying things separately which are really one experience to begin with. When I go deep inside and deeper still, paradox is like a

war zone, where parts want to stay separate instead of seeing your unity. At the deepest essence, I experience no war, but a kind of basic low, harmonious sound.

J: Do you imagine your experience of paradox useful? If so, please say how.

A: The essence of the paradox allows me to see the commonness of the sides and at the same time, the lovely differences between psychology and physics.

J: Have you had a realization, knowing or insight while struggling with this paradoxical experience?

A: This essence is typical of the kind of discovery and insight I have had while working on this paradox.

J: Has this paradoxical experience somehow transformed your life in some way?

A: This paradox and experiences associated with it have been a guiding line throughout my whole life.

*Thank you so much, Arny, for responding to my questions on paradox and for allowing me to share it.*

I found when talking to people about paradox that being open to staying with our paradoxical experiences can lead to life changing transformation and an individual sense of wholeness. Arny confirms his experience with paradox does that too. Additionally Arny describes an ongoing paradoxical experience that dynamically shapes his life. I had not considered a long term paradoxical engagement throughout life but then, perhaps, that is a defining characteristic of life!

Arny describes polarities as a war zone that “wants to remain separate.” Polarities might *want* to remain separate? What a thought. I recall my Monster dream in which the monsters were programmed to fight each other. “I” would prefer they wouldn’t fight but

instead cooperate and integrate. I have a new sense that the conflict itself is vital and perfect. At the deepest level there is unity, yet in the conflict there is energy and creative juice. Saying “yes” to conflict and “yes” to unity is simply a paradox at one level and part of the whole at another.

Resolving paradox isn't about polarized sides coming into agreement with each other, although that can happen. We don't need to agree with both sides of a polarity to untangle it—it is when we CAN congruently see both sides of a polarity, this enriches us and increases our awareness. This requires great detachment when one side is our deeply held belief and the other side conflicts with that. We may realize when seeing both sides that our initial position is no longer desirable, still we can see it along with the contradiction and understand those who continue to hold such beliefs. We learn to see more holistically and not only see through eyes of a belief system. We learn compassion.

## Chapter 6: Conclusion

*The opposite of a correct statement is a false statement. But the opposite of a profound truth may well be another profound truth.*

(Niels Bohr, n.d.)

As I journeyed along the path of paradox, I began to feel there is only one fundamental process, regardless of the paradigm one viewed it from. Many times I became disenchanted with my topic as it's been researched many times in many ways by greater minds than mine. I felt I had nothing new to offer.

It was hard to let go of my self-criticism. I was devoured by my inner critic. I had a high dream to offer some insight that could be useful for people. "Everyone else would find it boring and redundant," my internal critic said smugly. Maybe so, but I feel detached about that concern now, I needed to write it anyway. I felt painfully out of place to bring in my thoughts around Buddhism, philosophy, and physics, none of which I've formally studied. But when despairing at my predicament I'd remember my earlier feeling that if I can think it, I have an authority to choose to write about my ideas, so I did. These paradoxical entanglements persist as an integral part of living but making them more conscious are optional and powerful. They become vehicles to gain understanding of ourselves and the world. I came to realize that the process of awareness is never done. The process of awareness is never experienced enough. I am standing on a first step, barely sensing a vastness.

Dr. Sara Halprin asked me to go deeper into my snake vision experience, to get to the essence of the snake. It was the last thing she advised me in consensus reality. She was enthused about my snake vision saying it was a powerful image. She loved getting to the essence of every process I worked on with her. She wouldn't be persuaded otherwise. This reminds me of an article Halprin (2004) wrote in the *Journal of Process Oriented Psychology* on serendipity and Process Work. In it, she wrote, "If we can find our way into the sentient realm where all problems are rooted, then following the process back into consensus reality has unpredictable and often wonderful results" (p. 54). There is so much to receive by going as deeply as possible into our dreaming processes. That makes me curious. Yet I notice my desire to follow her advice met with reluctance. What is it now?

*I think about the snake in my vision. I notice my stomach roiling and making a low rumbling sound. My stomach is protesting. I'm so reluctant! I notice my all too familiar resistance, my edge, to going into the unknown of it. The extensive work I've done on my own paradoxical experiences and my edges around them still doesn't make it easy for me to drop my consensus identity and go into the impossible. I hold the polarities, do it, and don't do it . . . what is stopping me? Oh, a critic, an internal edge figure is around. It is saying, "You can't do it! Sara asked you to find the essence of the snake but you won't, you can't."*

*I feel myself going down, I'm tired. I want to stop writing on this paper. This is just too much. Maybe I should stop. I am falling for that damn critic, again. When will I ever learn? I am now again sucked into the critic role so now I have TWO*

*critics and a tyrant! Okay, I'll take some of your advice, critic; I'll take a break; I'll do it by not doing it.*

*Standing up, I notice the humidity tonight; my clothes are sticking to me. My stomach protests again. I think about my stomach and my reluctance. I change clothes and try to cool off. I notice ongoing rhythmic sounds, maybe they are coming from outside as my windows are open to catch whatever breeze may come through. What is that sound? Perhaps it's the sound of my ceiling fan, or the neighbors? It sounds mechanical. Edge, I think, exasperated at my random thoughts. Maybe I should pick up the mechanical energy and plug away at writing? No wonder it took me so long to write this paper, I can hang out with my familiar edges for eternity, albeit painfully. I could sit with my mouth agape forever, not even make an effort to close it (I let my mouth fall open). Oh, that reminds me of the snake. She opened her mouth and unhinged her jaws. I stand and open my mouth as wide as I can, feeling my jaws strain. Ow, that hurts; the discomfort reminds me of a chronic tension in my jaws. I feel an upsurge of energy, I'm interested.*

*I open my mouth wide like the snake in my vision. I'm the snake; I stretch my mouth wide and wait. Then I notice that everything, anything could come into my mouth. I imagine the entire universe flowing into my mouth, wow. It's being open to everything, all ideas, everything. I like that. What about my stomach? I hear a girl's muffled voice, maybe laughter from down the street, then a low conversation from another house, lots of activity for being midnight. What was that little movement over there? Weird, oh, I am being open to everything,*

*unconsciously! I yawn, I'm getting sleepy, I feel my jaws unhinge with the yawn. Oh, yawning wakes me up! It literally opens my awareness. There's something else too. The openness has a quality of capacity in it too. It is open and it has a capacity to swallow it all! I notice a feeling of strength in the back of my neck. Oh, snakes must have an incredible strength in the back of their necks to strike at lightening fast speed. Wow, another related chronic symptom, my stiff neck! I must have a lot of locked up power in there. But I am tired, another edge? I will probably erase all this in the morning. I'm really tired, I'm going to bed. I have to get up and work tomorrow.*

Sometime from when I went to bed thinking about my snake vision to getting up, I thought of my earliest childhood dream and myth. The snake in her capacity to open up to and swallow everything and be both outside and a part of it all reminds me of my childhood myth. In the last part of my childhood dream I was lying on the bottom of the ocean with my back on the white sand looking around at all the life going on above and around me. I saw everything. I was part of it and yet outside it too. It was great.

*But what is the essence? I think about the snake swallowing the universe. What would that be like? There's something passive about the experience, working isn't the process. I hold the experience and wait, watching. It is ecstatic. It is an ecstatic feeling, and so much aliveness, I'll call it life, sparking this way and that. I realize I don't know what life is! I feel myriad forms of something, an energizing principle, with its own impulses. I don't know where anything is going, it's just life expressing itself and that aliveness excites me. I love experiencing, watching, participating, and delighting in its unexpected actions and forms. I feel pure*



*delight and very much a part of it while also being detached from directly interacting with it. The snake's mouth remains open to continually receive the flow of the universe as it cannot be finitely contained since it's always in process. All sparks and flows. The essence is a quiet receptive lucidity. I put my hand in front of me to try to capture the essence behind it all. It is in the feeling of a slight open-palmed gesture. I play with the gesture; it fascinates me with its open, quiet simplicity. The snake vision ties into several of my chronic symptoms and my life's myth. My earlier seemingly random perceptions were aspects of this marginalized lucid part functioning unconsciously. There's always more to discover but for now this is enough.*

Edge work is working with paradox and paradoxical experience. I had not thought of the edge in terms of paradox before I began this research. It is important to realize when working with our own or other's edges that this is paradoxical experience conflicting with deeply-layered belief systems. Those beliefs may be blinding us to greater awareness and greater freedom but it is a critically valuable process to take time to negotiate with our edges and paradox, while challenging them. That experience is potentially life-changing. It is a big deal. I feel a deeper respect for the common struggles with my own and others' edges after researching paradox. It is a huge thing to process a personal paradoxical experience and not just drop it. Process Work is the only paradigm I know that has precise techniques to process paradoxical experience, helping it unfold into greater awareness. I can't write the words to express how amazing this is.

I am excited at the interconnectedness of the different schools of thought from science to religion to the arts. When one field is advanced, it helps the others progress further as well. This is surely an aspect of wholeness that transcends consensus reality.

I have many new questions. For instance, what *happens* between the sweat of learning and that spark, the magic “aha” moment of understanding? This is so mysterious. I can understand that learning is a paradoxical process but how is it that when one stays with paradox a new awareness can arise from what I define as the fundamental field of Consciousness? Is this similar or the same as the essence level in Process Work? What initiates subjective consciousness? I wonder about these questions then realize that researching and writing on paradox has brought me closer to who I am and who I am afraid to be.

## References

- Abbott, Edwin A. (1992). *Flatland: A romance of many dimensions*. Mineola, NY: Dover Thrift Edition. (Original work published in London, 1884)
- Barth, John. (1991). *The last voyage of somebody the sailor*. Little, Brown And Company.
- Bohr, Niels. (n.d.). Quote retrieved December, 2006, from [http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Niels\\_Bohr](http://en.wikiquote.org/wiki/Niels_Bohr)
- Delahunt, Michael. (n.d.). Aleatory and aleatoric composition, quotes. *Artlex Art Dictionary*. Retrieved July, 2006, from <http://www.artlex.com/ArtLex/a/aleatory.html>
- Elliot, T. S. (1940). *Four quartets: 2 East Coker*. Retrieved December, 2006, from <http://www.tristan.icom43.net/quartets/coker.html>
- Fukushima Keido Roshi. (2001, Winter semester). *The way of Zen*. Lecture delivered to Process Work community and friends, Process Work Center, Portland, Oregon.
- Goodbread, Joseph H. (1987). *Dreambody toolkit: A practical introduction to the philosophy, goals and practice of Process-Oriented Psychology*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Haley, Jay. (1973). *Uncommon therapy*. New York: W.W. Norton.
- Halprin, Sara. (2004, Summer). Serendipity doodah. *Journal of Process-Oriented Psychology*, 9(1), 54.
- Hawking, Stephen. (n.d.). Does God play dice? *Public Lectures*. Retrieved November, 2006, from <http://www.hawking.org.uk/lectures/dice.html>
- Ingram, Catherine. (1990). *In the footsteps of Gandhi: Conversations with spiritual/social activists*. Berkeley, CA: Parallax Press.
- Ingram, Catherine. (2003). *Passionate presence: Experiencing the seven qualities of awakened awareness*. New York: Penguin Putnam.
- Marshall, Ian, & Zohar, Denah. (1997). *Who's afraid of Schrodinger's cat?* New York: William Morrow.

- Mindell, Arnold. (n.d.). *Introduction to Process Work, Process Work page*. Retrieved January, 2005, from <http://www.aamindell.net>
- Mindell, Arnold. (n.d.). *Introduction to Process Work, Process Work page*. Retrieved November, 2006, from <http://www.aamindell.net>
- Mindell, Arnold. (2000). *Dreaming while awake: Techniques for 24-hour lucid dreaming*. Charlottesville, VA: Hampton Roads.
- Roessing, Susanne. (2001). *A dreamy eye is walking by*. Author.
- Revar, Jay. (n.d.). Process Work glossary. Retrieved January, 2005, from <http://www.aamindell.net>
- Sartre, Jean Paul. (1943). *Being and nothingness: An essay on phenomenological ontology*. Retrieved January, 2006, from [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Being\\_and\\_Nothingness:\\_An\\_Essay\\_on\\_Phienomenological\\_Ontology](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Being_and_Nothingness:_An_Essay_on_Phienomenological_Ontology)
- Schneider, Kirk J. (1999). *The paradoxical self: Toward an understanding of our contradictory nature*. Amherst, MA: Humanity Books.
- Schrödinger, Erwin. (1983). (John D. Trimmer, Trans.). Die Geganwartige Situation in der Quantenmechanik [The Present Situation in Quantum Mechanics]. *Die Naturwissenschaften* 23(1935), 807-812; 823-828; 844-849.
- Tolson, Jay. (2006, October 23). Is there room for the soul? *US News & World Report*, 57-63.