

The dreaming source of creativity: 30 creative and magical ways to work on yourself, by Amy Mindell, Portland, Oregon, Lao Tse Press, 2005, 243 pp., £16.25 (paperback), ISBN 9781887078733

Amy writes enthusiastically and warmly, hence my use of her first name. I take my cue from the author in this, as she refers to her husband, founder of Process Oriented Psychology/Process Work, Arnold Mindell, from the outset as Arny. At no point does she, one might say, formally introduce him, although she references him throughout. For readers new to Process Work, this may be disconcerting; indeed, only on the back cover of the book will you find that information. Perhaps this approach may arouse curiosity – or it may just prove confusing.

But please don't let that put you off! This is a very personal approach by a very personable writer. Again from the back cover, we learn that as well as being a process-oriented therapist, she is an artist, musician and dancer. The step-by-step exercises that make up the 30 Magical Ways to work on yourself provide a hands-on way of experiencing how Process Work works, while often proving personally enlightening. Hence this book will be of interest to a variety of creative arts therapists as well as to individuals.

The book is amply illustrated with photographs, mostly of Amy's and others' puppets, drawings, etc., including some from her classes. As with many art therapy books, it is regrettable that, apart from the cover illustration, these are not in colour, particularly as colour printing has reduced in cost with the introduction of digital photography and printing. I think of the

publisher Taschen's lovely art books which are inexpensive, though maybe economies of scale enter in here.

Process Work has been evolving for over thirty years as a development of Jung's work, and is also influenced by Taoism, shamanism and quantum physics. In the Prologue Amy writes, 'The foundation of Process Work springs from the ancient Taoist beliefs in the wisdom and continual unfolding of nature. In Essence, Process Work focuses on what nature is presenting in any given situation. As practitioners we seek to follow and adjust to that flow in our work with individuals, couples and groups' (p. x). 'Nature' in Process Work is understood as whatever is happening in the moment.

Amy draws on many of her own experiences to introduce some of the basic concepts of Process Work as well as the benefits of the exercises, which are all tried and tested, whether by her alone or in classes she has facilitated. Therefore, although this book is about working on yourself, it can very easily be applied in small groups, which will be of particular relevance to art and drama therapists. Music therapists are perhaps less well-served, but may be able to draw inspiration from her ideas. While Amy shares some of her own experiences with music and song, she is less than explicit about how to work with them.

One particular concept that Amy refers to throughout the book, is that of the 'Intentional Field', which Amy also calls 'It', as in 'It Creates!' (p. 79). This seems to be the same 'it' that Shaun McNiff describes in *Trust the Process: An Artist's Guide to Letting Go* as 'a force' that is 'not subject to control', that is 'outside the reach of explanatory definition': 'It is the primary carrier of creation' (1998:24-25). I think of it as the creative force, or source, pre-becoming/manifestation.

Amy suggests that ‘(t)here are at least three ways to read this book’ (p.6), none of which I have followed exactly. Although familiar with Process Work theory, I found myself having to hop back and forth, to and from different parts of the book, in order to comprehend particular concepts. The index was invaluable for this, though when I looked up ‘It’, had I not understood that in Amy’s mind ‘It’ equates to the Intentional Field, I might have been quite lost. Had she applied the same logical approach to the rest of the book that she does to the exercises, it might have been easier to follow.

I have ‘test-driven’ the book, as it were, by facilitating a couple of Process Work Learning Labs.* These take place monthly on a Saturday in Dublin.

In February and March 2015, I facilitated two workshops named after Chapter 4, ‘Socks’. Of her inspiration for this chapter Amy writes, ‘I had read a few children’s books about making sock puppets and decided that that was a simple and easy method for getting in touch with the creativity of the Intentional Field’ (p. 77). We followed the exercises in this chapter, leading from creating a sock puppet to becoming your sock puppet in the moment, thereby discovering and exploring an aspect of yourself [Fig. 1] – to a group discussion among the puppets. At Amy’s suggestion, instead of us ‘talking about issues’, we ‘let the puppets present issues, interact with one another, and see what happens. It might be a catastrophe, but what do you really have to lose?’ (p. 85).

*Processwork Learning Labs: Monthly, Saturday afternoons from 2.30pm to 4.30 p.m. Nominal fee to cover rent of room. To be added to the emailing list, email gracewalsh@gracewalsh.ie. See also www.processworkireland.org and www.facebook.com/Process-Work-Learning-Lab-Ireland.

Not a lot of interaction took place, which is information in itself and, had time allowed we might have explored that further. But it certainly wasn't a catastrophe, and it led to the next workshop in April, which another participant, Grace Walsh, asked me to co-facilitate with her. It was an exercise on group work which we titled 'Umbrella Group' based on Amy's Chapter 8: 'The Flying Umbrella Story'. Grace, a process-oriented therapist and teacher, felt that it would be a good way to introduce process-oriented group work experientially, without having to go into the theory behind it. This proved successful, as those present found it thoroughly engaging; and the results, as usual with Process Work (in my experience), were surprising and enlightening. This is a playful approach which, in this case, resulted in us all realising we needed more play in our lives.

I facilitated a further Learning Lab in June 2015, a further attempt at putting people in touch with the Intentional Field using an exercise that Amy titled 'The Intentional Field in Movement', beginning on p. 16. The exercise starts in the same sensing/feeling way as in Authentic Movement (for those familiar with Mary Starks Whitehouse's work, in which I am no expert, but of which I have some slight experience). I decided to adapt the exercise with a view to encouraging interaction. But the Intentional Field had other ideas, as I observed that none of the participants were keen to engage. By returning to Amy's exercise and encouraging people to follow what was happening in themselves, a satisfactory conclusion was reached for everyone. Fortunately, I was able to drop my 'idea' and follow what was actually happening.

With its mixture of personal anecdote, ideas sometimes randomly proposed, encouragement to use whatever materials you have to hand, and lots of sharing of experience, *The Dreaming Source of Creativity* is a rich, if sometimes less-than-easy-to-

navigate, resource, brimming with the warmth and generosity of its author – of which I am happy to acknowledge having had personal experience.

Reference

McNiff, S., 1998. *Trust the process: An artist's guide to letting go*. Boston and London: Shambala.

Mary O'Neill

Art Psychotherapist

monartprocess@gmail.com

Mary O'Neill, IACAT-Accredited Art Psychotherapist, graduated in 2014 from CIT Crawford College of Art and Design with a first class honours Masters' degree in Art Therapy. Her Masters' thesis, entitled 'Merging Practices: Process Oriented Psychology as applied to Art Therapy', is included in an online bibliography of references to Arnold Mindell's process oriented psychology, worldwork, and deep democracy, which can be accessed at <http://www.iapop.com/bibliography-3/>. Scroll down to O'Neill, M. to find the link to Merging Practice. See her profile at <http://maryoneill.iacat.ie>.



Fig. 1. 'Arty the Artist', sock puppet by Mary O'Neill
Photo: Aoife Bairéad