

Commentary: Revolution and Worldwork

Originally published for the *Journal of Process Oriented Psychology*
Spring/Summer 1993, Vol. 5, No. 1 The Process Press, Portland Oregon
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I am happy that the feature topic of this issue of the Journal is Worldwork, We want to welcome all of our readers from Process Work groups in Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Russia and other regions of the former Soviet Union, those from Japan, Australia, India and Kenya, Canada, Switzerland, Belgium, Germany. Greece, Italy, Ireland, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, Finland and Holland, from the United States and many other areas of the world.

As the world is filled more and more with ethnic conflicts, poverty, and attempts at discovering forms of sustainable government, there is an urgency in finding new methods to deal with our human struggles. These world events awaken all of us to the important role we have, big or small, in shaping the destiny of our world and our relationships to one another, For example, entire countries in Africa are plagued by drought, agricultural and refugee problems. and constant civil war. The attempt to deliver food to millions of starving people in Somalia has shown the limitations of a solution which may not deal sufficiently with the people of that nation, and may exacerbate its civil wars, India is plagued with tension between Hindus and Moslems. With the dissolution of the Communist Bloc have come numerous struggles economically, politically and ethnically. Former Yugoslavia is engulfed today in a bath of ethnic battles, The United States continues to struggle with its 400 year old civil rights issues. These are just a few of the many conflicts which make up our world today. The sheer number of on-going conflicts points to the limitations of our abilities to deal with them. Until now modern politics, conventional concepts of democracy, capitalistic and communistic ideology, and police enforcement have not been able to deal with deep seated conflicts and revolutions. Spiritual visions and psychological work do not seem to deal sufficiently with outer struggles.

In reading James DeFronzo (1991) about some of the 20th century revolutions. I was struck by the similarities in the various revolutionary struggles, DeFronzo shows, almost with predictability, how the underprivileged, poor, peasant classes joined together in order to overthrow the current corrupt government which did not support their economic and human rights. He portrays the way that more affluent countries have colonized and enslaved native peoples or manipulated other governments in order to gather economic or strategic power. Yet, it was striking that when revolution happened, the groups who took over often mirrored the dictators or monarchs that they overthrew.

So much has been gained through the blood, sweat and tears of those who fought passionately for fundamental human rights, for a more just world. Through these struggles we have gained many elements of freedom that we know today. Yet, we must ask ourselves, "What can we learn from history?" "Are there other ways to go about world change?" Much of history might leave us depressed or hopeless. Is it possible to escape these cycles of history? Will we ever discover the human rights that the French fought for in 1789 or that were hoped for in the civil rights movement in the United States? Are political parties and economic systems so entrenched that they cannot be altered?

I feel that Worldwork is one very important and hopeful contribution to our global scene. Worldwork means working with the field of the whole system - individual, relationship, group, subgroup and large group work -- to represent the various roles and deep feelings in the field, creating deep democracy (Mindell, 1992). It does not mean that roles will necessarily change, but suggests a new way of dealing with conflicts which involves awareness and compassion. It implies that it is not "decisions" and "laws" which are ultimately important but rather the "relationships" between the various roles in our world field. Focusing on relationships between the parts means that we may grow from painful interactions instead of solely passing laws which only temporarily alleviate the problem.

Worldwork is a grass roots approach which attempts to work on conflicts on the large group level as well as the relationship and individual level, and challenges all of us to remain awake in the midst of world change. It respects the potential leadership of each individual by recognizing the leadership "role" as a roving position which anyone at any time, who is aware of what is happening, may occupy (Mindell, 1992).

Worldwork takes a step back and sees the roles that we fall into not only as personal drives but as "timespirits" (Mindell, 1992) which appear all over the world. It attempts to process these spirits of the times with awareness as they bubble up and conflict with one another. In so doing, roles and positions begin to change as all of us become active members of a changing and evolving world.

Field awareness as used in Worldwork steps out of history and should, therefore, be able to make a conscious revolution - something history sorely needs.

Amy Mindell, May 15, 1993

Works Cited:

DeFronzo, James. *Revolutions and Revolutionary Movements*. Boulder: Westview Press, 1991.

Mindell, Arnold. *The Leader as Martial Artist*. New York: HarperCollins, 1992.