

# A Brief Introduction to Deep Democracy

By Stanford Siver

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Repression of conflict destroys countries, communities, organizations, relationships, and love.

Unless we learn to use conflict to develop awareness, we will ultimately destroy our world.

—Daniel Bowling, CEO, Duke Dispute management Center

The roots of deep democracy are vast. They extend to the work of Sun-Tzu, Plato, indigenous traditions; the political philosophy of Machiavelli, Malthus, and Hobbes; concepts from the conflict field and spirituality; the social philosophy of Dewey and Royce; the prophetic traditions of Gandhi and Dr. King, and the literary traditions of Emerson, Whitman, James Baldwin, Toni Morrison, and many others.

This paper approaches these subfields through the work of a few contemporary writers who have integrated their work. Robert Kaplan, conservative journalist for the Atlantic Monthly, though one sided in his views, does an outstanding job of summarizing a line of thinking from Sun-Tzu and Plato, through the philosophy of Machiavelli, Malthus, Hobbes, Adam Smith, and John Stuart Mill, offering a plausible explanation for the thinking of President Bush and his administration.

Judith M. Green, through her text Deep Democracy, integrates much of the thinking of Dewey and other social philosophers. Cornel West, in Democracy Matters, draws on the work of Martin Luther King, Jr., Ralph Waldo Emerson, James Baldwin, Walt Whitman, Herman Melville, and Toni Morrison. Various NGOs provide a view of deep democracy as it is being practiced in the world—demonstrating various approaches for bringing philosophical theory into practical application.

Finally, Arny Mindell, a process worker and theorist, provides a model—which has roots in quantum physics, psychology, eastern philosophy, and shamanism—that reveals practical ways to practice deep democracy.

We have frequently printed the word Democracy, yet I cannot too often repeat that it is a word the real gist of which still sleeps, quite unawakened, notwithstanding the resonance and the many angry tempests out of which its syllables have come, from pen or tongue. It is a great word, whose history, I suppose, remains unwritten, because that history has yet to be enacted.

—Walt Whitman, *Democratic Vistas*, 1871

## Introduction to Deep Democracy<sup>1</sup>

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**de·moc·ra·cy** (di mak're se) *n.* [Gr *demokratia* < *demos*, the people + *kratein*, to rule < *kratos*, strength] **1** government in which the people hold the ruling power either directly or through elected representatives **2** a country, state, etc. with such government **3** majority rule **4** the principle of equality of rights, opportunity, and treatment **5** the common people, esp. as the wielders of political power. (Webster's, 1983, p. 366)

Democracy—commonly defined as the free and equal right of every person to participate in a system of government, often practiced by electing representatives of the people—is generally said to have originated in Ancient Greece when the *demos* organized against their leaders' abuse of power. But democracy is more than a body of laws and procedures related to the sharing of power. President Carter said that, "Democracy is like the experience of life itself—always changing, infinite in its variety, sometimes turbulent and all the more valuable for having been tested for adversity" (Carter, 1978).<sup>2</sup> How is democracy like life? In what dimensions is it changing and turbulent?

One example of the dynamic turbulence of democracy in the United States is the evolution of freedom of the press and the practical application of the First Amendment rights to free speech. The first American newspaper, Publick Occurrences, Both Foreign

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<sup>1</sup> Rather than confusing the reader by using one of several obscure systems of gender neutral pronouns, alternating between masculine or feminine pronouns, or tediously using both out of a sense of political correctness, I have chosen to use feminine pronouns throughout, except where clearly referring to a specific male person.

and Domestic (Massachusetts Historical Society, 2004), published its first and only issue in Boston on Thursday, September 25<sup>th</sup>, 1690. Publication was stopped by the governor of Boston who objected to the paper's negative tone regarding British rule and the local ministries were offended by a report that the King of France had had an affair with his son's wife (Virtual Museum of Printing, 2004).

Up until 1919 free speech and freedom of the press in the United States meant “little more than no prior restraint, that is, one could say what one wanted, but then could be prosecuted for it” (Holmes, 1919). In 1859 John Stuart Mill pointed out the risks involved in suppressing ideas in his essay, On Liberty:

But the peculiar evil of silencing the expression of an opinion is, that it is robbing the human race; posterity as well as the existing generation; those who dissent from the opinion, still more than those who hold it. If the opinion is right, they are deprived of the opportunity of exchanging error for truth: if wrong, they lose, what is almost as great a benefit, the clearer perception and livelier impression of truth, produced by its collision with error. (Mill, 1859)

Despite Mill's impassioned plea and the wide distribution of On Liberty—which had great impact on the public discourse of its day as well as on political philosophy—the US maintained a very conservative view towards freedom of speech until 1919.

That view changed abruptly in 1919 when Supreme Court Judge Oliver Wendell Holmes entered a dissenting opinion in favor of a group of radical pamphleteers:

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<sup>2</sup> Jimmy Carter Speech to Parliament of India (June 2, 1978).

Jacob Abrams and others had been convicted of distributing pamphlets criticizing the Wilson administration for sending troops to Russia in the summer of 1918. Although the government could not prove that the pamphlets had actually hindered the operation of the military, an anti-radical lower court judge had found that they might have done so, and found Abrams and his co-defendants guilty. On appeal, seven members of the Supreme Court had used Holmes's "clear and present danger" test to sustain the conviction. But Holmes, joined by Louis D. Brandeis, dissented, and it is this dissent that is widely recognized as the starting point in modern judicial concern for free expression. (US Department of State, 1919)

Abrams publications seem quite lame by today's standards, including comments such as: "Workers—Wake Up," "Woe unto those who will be in the way of progress. Let solidarity live," and "German militarism combined with allied capitalism to crush the Russian revolution..." and working class enlightenment (US Department of State, 1919).

Justice Holmes ruled that:

It is only the present danger of immediate evil or an intent to bring it about that warrants Congress in setting a limit to the expression of opinion where private rights are not concerned. Congress certainly cannot forbid all effort to change the mind of the country. (Holmes, 1919)

In his ruling, Justice Holmes supported the importance of public discourse and freedom of speech with these now widely quoted words: "The best test of truth is the power of the thought to get itself accepted in the competition of the market" (Holmes, 1919). But, after more than twenty-five centuries of development in political philosophy, it is only

within the last century that US and European thought has begun to support freedom of speech in a meaningful way. Holmes's thinking did not account for structural forces that tend to repress various ideas in support of special interests.

Joseph Stiglitz, former Chairman of Council of Economic Advisers under President Clinton and former Chief Economist and Senior VP of the World Bank maintains:

Secrecy [...] undermines democracy. There can be democratic accountability only if those to whom these public institutions are supposed to be accountable are well informed about what they are doing—including what choices they confronted and how those decisions were made. (Stiglitz, 2003, p. 229)

Deep Democracy threatens to press the envelope of political thinking even further. Deep democracy has many aspects, many of which relate to philosophical concepts derived from quantum physics. Deep democracy at its deepest manifestation refers to an openness towards not only the views of other people and groups but also to emotions and personal experiences, which tend to get excluded from conflict and rational public discourse (Mindell, 1992). R. Buckminster Fuller said that we need to support the intuitive wisdom and comprehensive informed-ness of each and every individual to ensure our continued fitness for survival as a species (1981, p. xi). This attitude is sometimes referred to as the guest house attitude, referring to a poem by Jelaludinn Rumi, as translated by Coleman Barks:

## THE GUEST HOUSE

This being human is a guest house.  
Every morning a new arrival.

A joy, a depression, a meanness,  
some momentary awareness comes  
as an unexpected visitor.

Welcome and entertain them all!  
Even if they're a crowd of sorrows,  
who violently sweep your house  
empty of its furniture,  
still, treat each guest honorably.  
He may be clearing you out  
for some new delight.

The dark thought, the shame, the malice,  
meet them at the door laughing,  
and invite them in.

Be grateful for whoever comes,  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond.

—Jelaludinn Rumi (1995, p. 109)

Speaking in a circle of women who gathered shortly after 9-11, Susan Collin Marks, of Search for Common Ground, the world's largest international conflict NGO, said:

We need to accommodate the different groups and not have a win-lose [situation] where the winner takes all. In South Africa—having been under apartheid fifty years, and before that under all sorts of authoritarian rule, the British, the Dutch—when we came to our transition we asked ourselves, "What is democracy, what does it mean, what does it mean for us?" A group of people went around the country asking, "What do you think democracy is, and what are we going to call it, and what will our democracy

look like?" They came up with the term "deep democracy." They said, "For us, this is about deep democracy, not just about surface democracy." (Peace X Peace, 2004)

The idea of supporting a deeper dialogue has been around at least since Plato argued for the inclusion of women in public discourse. Athens needed the intelligence of all and could not afford to exclude women as thinkers and leaders. Even if Plato did not expand his thinking enough to extend that acceptance to slaves and other classes and races, he planted a cultural seed that took another twenty five hundred years to sprout and is only now coming to fruition in culturally creative ways.

Daisaku Ikeda, a Japanese Buddhist scholar of peace and founder of Soka Gakkai International,<sup>3</sup> maintains that "dialogue is the key to surmounting cultural and philosophical boundaries and forging the mutual trust and understanding necessary for lasting peace" (Galtung & Ikeda, 1995, p. viii). Ikeda views peace not as the absence of war, but as a condition wherein the dignity and fundamental rights of all people are respected.

There are many views on fundamental rights, and public discourse takes many forms. Thousands of nongovernmental organizations exist to support discourse, consensus building, and the development of policy recommendations. When these efforts fail, the last avenue is civil protest—one of the greatest challenges and proving grounds for any democracy. Democracy, free expression, and the importance of participation are easily defended when everyone remains polite, is in agreement on basic issues, and conforms to certain generally unstated rules of interaction. But, protesters generally do not agree on

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<sup>3</sup> Soka Gakkai International (SGI) is a Buddhist association with more than 12 million members in 190 countries and territories worldwide.

basic issues (even amongst themselves), tend to disagree violently with the mainstream, and often feel that their voice is unheard and that high levels of impassioned communications and civil disobedience are justified. The challenge then is one of balance: to defend the right to freedom of speech and assembly, while maintaining public order and countering attempts at intimidation or violence. Governmental facilitation of protest is challenging because political and bureaucratic inertia prevents it from being open to change from the outside. Suppression of peaceful protest in the name of order invites repression, while unrestrained protest invites anarchy.

This is a difficult balance to maintain. Ultimately, it depends on the commitment of those in power to maintaining the institutions of democracy and the precepts of individual rights as well as the commitment of the mainstream to support these efforts, and the commitment of the marginalized groups to self-limit their forms of protest. A US government publication called What is Democracy? maintains that, “Democratic societies are capable of enduring the most bitter disagreement among its citizens—except for disagreement about the legitimacy of democracy itself” (US Department of State, 2004).

President Fidel V. Ramos was president of the Republic of the Philippines from 1992 to 1998. Prior to winning the presidency, he was involved in the People's Power Revolution of 1986. While serving as president he introduced a comprehensive Social Reform Agenda, leading the Philippine economy to grow dramatically. He stresses the symbiotic connection between democracy and human development:

Since my early years as an infantry captain in the 1950s, I have come to realize that the symbiotic connection between democracy and human development is quite complex. Democracy does not automatically ensure

development, and neither does sustained development reliably guarantee people's freedom. Yet, democracy does reinforce human development, and human development strengthens democracy. The two reinforce each other. (2003)

The symbiotic connection between democracy and human development, which President Ramos stresses, also occurs in the symbiotic connection between deep democracy and facilitation. One of the primary tools in the facilitation of deep democracy is the use, maintenance, and awareness of metaskills<sup>4</sup> (Mindell, 1992, p. 49). Facilitators of deep democracy work to develop, maintain, and learn how to use various metaskills. These metaskills include openness to diversity, toughness, softness, fluidity, anger, intractability, love, detachment, concern for the well being of the others, and a genuine desire to achieve consensus. Some of the metaskills in that list are organic responses and others have to be developed. Even metaskills that come quite naturally to a facilitator must also be further developed to ensure that they do not become used automatically simply because they are so well developed. The range of metaskills available to and needed by facilitators of deep democracy explains why the internal psychological and spiritual growth and inner peace of the facilitator is so important.

The following scenario describes a situation wherein the signals indicate that the facilitator's metaskill fail to demonstrate concern for the other:

Signals of rank imbalance and complex roles are often evident in photographs. In 1998 a picture was published throughout the world showing the IMF's Managing Director "a short, neatly dressed former

French Treasury bureaucrat... standing with a stern face and crossed arms over the seated and humiliated president of Indonesia. The hapless president was being forced, in effect, to turn over economic sovereignty of his country to the IMF in return for the aid his country needed. In the end, ironically, much of the money went not to help Indonesia but to bail out the “colonial power’s” private sector creditors. (Stiglitz, 2003, p. 40-1)

One might wonder whether the imposition of this one-sided and expensive “bail out” contributed to the demise of Indonesia’s stability and economic recovery. Ongoing problems in Indonesia include: widespread poverty, terrorism, transition to democratically elected governments after four decades of authoritarianism, banking reform, cronyism and corruption, human rights violations, and armed separatist movements (CIA, 2004). A travel’s advisory service reports that “Indonesia has suffered great upheaval since 1998 [the year of the “bail out”], resulting in everything from peaceful demonstrations to armed conflict” (Lonely Planet, 2004).

Deep democracy involves not only openness to other individuals, groups, and diverse views but an openness to experience, which includes feelings, dreams, body symptoms, altered states of consciousness, synchronicities, and an awareness of signals, roles, and the structural dynamics of the interactions between the parties involved.

Repression and exploitation are the two most basic modern forms of structural violence; cardiovascular diseases and cancer are the two basic somatic conditions brought on by modernization. Repression and cardiovascular diseases are similar in that both impede circulation.

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<sup>4</sup> Metaskill: The feeling tone with which a person performs an intervention.

Exploitation and cancer resemble each other in that a part of the social or human organism lives at the expense of the rest. Peace research and health research are metaphors for each other; each can learn from the other.

Similarly, both peace theory and medical science emphasize the role of consciousness and mobilization in healing. (Galtung & Ikeda, 1995, p. 38-9)

The relationship between somatic experience, altered states of consciousness, and conflict may not be only metaphorical. Ikeda says that Buddhism (and other spiritual traditions) “transcends the dimension on which all phenomena are perceived as interrelated and reveals the dynamism of the universal life on which all interrelations depend” (Galtung & Ikeda, 1995, p. 84). Similarly, the process oriented worldwork theories and practice use experiential phenomena to reveal the deeper underlying universal dynamic and its interrelations on a practical level (see Worldwork on page 39).

### **Dualism & Innerwork**

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Various spiritual and philosophical traditions have attracted followers by dividing the phenomenal world into a dualism of good and evil. This powerfully seductive metamyth provides an easily embraced world view that conveniently places blame elsewhere. The followers of dualistic paradigms seek easy answers and avoid more complex paradigms that challenge their own simplistic assumptions in favor of more complex analysis, intrapersonal psychological exploration, and more efficacious thinking. Ikeda refers to “certain kinds of people” who embrace dualistic thinking:

Certain kinds of people have always been attracted by the spellbinding lucidity of dualisms such as good and evil, light and dark, friend and foe, love and hate and so on. [...] Observable in all places at all times, this

weakness makes the human beings who demonstrate it ripe prey for the persuasive techniques of groups like the unprincipled ancient Athenian demagogues. [...] Probably the tradition of thinking in terms of dualities and of making facile discriminatory distinctions contributes to the hard, cruel aspects you find in the behavior of Europe. Horrific discrimination such as so-called racial purification in the former Yugoslavia and the emergence of historically retrogressive ultra-rightists and racists in Germany, France, and Italy indicate the extent to which his dark tradition persists. (Galtung & Ikeda, 1995, p. 61)

It is interesting that by speaking out against “certain kinds of people,” Ikeda perpetuates the very duality he describes by downing the ultra-rightists and racists. Better, in one view, to speak against the practice of one-sidedness and to also acknowledge the one-sidedness inherent in that position and within oneself. Ikeda acknowledges this by continuing:

To liberate modern humanity—and not just Europeans—from the spell of such attitudes, we must look for the evil at fault within human beings. We must make ourselves realize thoroughly that the evil inside is primary and the evil outside only secondary in significance. The most important thing to learn from the experiences of the twentieth century is this: whether the issue is racial, as in the case of fascism, or class-related, as in the case of communism, attempting to trace primary causes of evil to external factors invites tragedy and slaughter. Transcending inner evil is both our most urgent duty for the twenty-first century and the essential goal

of all reform movements. This is what we of Soka Gakkai International refer to as the “human revolution.” (Galtung & Ikeda, 1995, p. 61-2)

The following exercise, developed by Army Mindell, details one way of participating in Ikeda’s “human revolution” by developing your own inner sense of deep democracy through getting to better know your own tendencies in conflict by interacting with what he called “the dynamism of universal life.” It is meant as a training exercise for development of awareness and inner peace. It is not meant as a program to be followed during attack, or as a panacea for conflict.

- Imagine the worst attack you have suffered in public.
- Act out the person who attacked you and teach someone else how to play this person as you experiment with the following methods of defense:
  - *Support your attacker:* Admit that your attacker is correct and that you need to change. And then change and demonstrate how you would respond from that new changed place.
  - *Explore your attacker’s affect:* Through interacting with the helper who is playing the attacker, find out what her hidden motivation is. It may not be conscious for this person, but see if you can imagine into it and discover it. Does she want to attack you? Does she want to make you realize that she is also an intelligent leader? Is she attacking because she has also been attacked and is in pain?
  - *Take your own side:* Amid how hurt you are and show your hurt to the attacker. Or, defend yourself and attack the attacker back.

- *Drop your role:* Role play as if you are no longer you, but are now a facilitator helping the attacker to criticize you even more precisely, more clearly, and more directly.
- *Accept your attacker as a teacher:* Ask her to model the changes she expects you to make in yourself.
- *Work on yourself publicly:* Report to the attacker what is happening to you internally as you are being attacked.
- *Critique your attacker's methods of attacking:* Is she forceful enough? Is she too forceful and more hurtful than critical? Are there double signals that make her incongruent? Is she sticking to her side even when she feels your own? Can she switch roles? Is she sufficiently compassionate? Use your awareness to take her side and help her grow. Don't get hypnotized by a part of you that may know that she is at least partly right.
- *Ask for help:* Ask her to help you grow. Were you honest about your feelings? Were you real and congruent? Were you also able to detach and flow with what was happening? Does your attacker now trust you? (Mindell, 1992, p. 59-60)

Seeing conflict as an opportunity for inner personal growth, and seeing inner growth as a solution to conflict, is a challenging view to maintain. It is also an unusual approach to socio-economic affairs, as radical in scope as the shift from Newtonian to quantum thinking in physics. Referring to the Marxist-socialist society in the former Soviet Union, Ikeda wrote:

Gandhi saw that the socialist formula, in which first priority went to the reformation of the political-economic system, was an inversion. He realized that human beings are the true starting point and that, to be long-lasting, all external revolutions must arrive from internal revolutions. The more violent the times, the more unflinchingly human beings must direct their searching gazes inward. This is the eternal theme to which he would have us all return. (Galtung & Ikeda, 1995, p. 63-4)

Galtung continues:

What you say has a great message for left-wing people who, in their hatred of capitalism and the military establishment, either forget or never develop compassion for the victims of revolutions. The full human capability for both outer dialogue with others and inner dialogue with the self provides a good starting point for searching inward gazes. (Galtung & Ikeda, 1995, p. 64)

Robert Kaplan, political pundit, conflict scholar, and journalist for the Atlantic Monthly, maintains that “Good governance can emerge only from a sly understanding of men’s passions” (Kaplan, 2002, p. 87), and what better place to start than within one’s self? Again, this is not a panacea. James Madison maintained that a “nation of philosophers is as little to be expected as the philosophical race of kings wished for by Plato” (Hamilton, Madison, Jay, & Hamilton, 1999, No. 49), but why not work towards it?

## Dualistic Democracy aka Political Philosophy: The Roots of Democracy

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*Politics is a pendulum  
whose swings between anarchy and tyranny  
are fueled by perpetually rejuvenated illusions.  
—Einstein*

*You talk of food?  
I have no taste for food.  
What I really crave is slaughter and blood and the choking groans of men!  
(Homer, 1996, Book 19, Line 254)*

The roots of democracy and political philosophy are bathed in the blood of unimaginable carnage. It is the human search for stability as well as a search for justification of the use of force. “Man’s [and woman’s] real treasure is the treasure of his [and her] mistakes, piled up stone by stone through thousands of years...” (Kaplan, 2002, P. xvii). As to the interpretation of those stones, there is great debate and a complex array of views that tend to be dualistic in terms of good and evil.

### **From the Right**

Kaplan sees the enormous anti-Iraq-war demonstrations that occurred around the world early in 2003 last February as evidence that “life inside the post-industrial cocoon of Western democracy has made people incapable of imagining life inside a totalitarian system” (Kaplan, 2003).

With affluence often comes not only the loss of imagination but also the loss of historical memory. Thus global economic growth in the twenty-first century can be expected to create mass societies even more deluded than the ones we have now—the very actions necessary to protect

human rights and democracy will become increasingly hard to explain to those who have never been deprived of them. (Kaplan, 2003)

Kaplan thus extends the projection of otherness onto any dissenting individuals who disagree with a certain political position, and uses a pseudo scientific argument to justify increased repression:

Today's warriors come often from the hundreds of millions of unemployed young males in the developing world, angered by the income disparities that accompany globalization. Globalization is Darwinian.<sup>5</sup> It means economic survival of the fittest—those groups and individuals that are disciplined, dynamic, and ingenious will float to the top, while cultures that do not compete well technologically will produce an inordinate number of warriors. ... An age of chemical and biological weapons is perfectly suited for religious martyrdom. (Kaplan, 2002, p. 119)

This view sees the economically, technologically disenfranchised young men as a threat and hates them because they will not conform to a system even though their only way to conform is to die psychologically and spiritually. And yet, despite the proliferation of chemical, biological, and, soon, nuclear weapons the instance of religious martyrdom remains fairly low. Why? Why have millions of young men in the Middle East, Africa, Latin America, Asia, Europe, and the US not erupted even more violently than they have? Is it due to the restraining effects of competing groups? The counter terrorism efforts of the western governments? Or, is there another role present in the young men?

That they have not yet erupted in completely unrestrained hatred and violence means that there is another role present that supports something other than unrestrained violence. In each situation that role needs to be explored so that it can be expressed and become more conscious. What keeps them from killing? Is it a moral boundary? A belief in a more meaningful solution and a brighter future than killing?

Kaplan sees things as moving towards a minimal international morality (Kaplan, 2002, p. 144), meaning that the mainstream governments will be increasingly disinclined to exercise restraint when considering military options to subdue acts that they perceive as aggression. These ideas seem strangely antithetical to democracy.

Classical political philosophy evolved in a pre-industrial society that lacked mass communications. “The Industrial Revolution [...] brought mass society and democratic politics, and the world [referring to certain aspects of policy making and economic control] was no longer run by an intellectually oriented elite” (R. Cooper, 2003, p. 10-1). Industrialization brought many technological changes that impacted the course of democratization, as well as the evolution of democracy. Advances in printing, for example, aided the American Revolution by improving communications and forming a mass society. That the world was no longer run by an intellectually oriented elite meant that the people became a part of the policy making engine for the first time in history. This presented the intellectually oriented elite with a new challenge: How to maintain control of policy and capital while appearing to practice democracy?

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<sup>5</sup> The term Darwinian is used in the quote and throughout this paper to refer to the widely accepted interpretation of Darwin—survival of the fittest—even though Darwin’s actual thinking differed somewhat from this position.

The new, global media think in terms of abstract universal principles—the traditional weapon of the weak seeking to restrain the strong—even as the primary responsibility of our policymakers must be to maintain our strength vis-à-vis China, Russia, and the rest of the world. (Kaplan, 2003)

Kaplan raises the possibility of several just but incompatible value systems existing side by side, which ideally would be accepted and even expected within a democracy:

Machiavelli’s ideal is the “well-governed *patria*,” not individual freedom. The “well-governed *patria*” may at times be incompatible with an aggressive media, whose search for the “truth” can yield little more than embarrassing facts untempered by context, so the risk of exposure may convince leaders to devise new methods of secrecy. The more the barons of punditry demand “morality” in complex situations overseas, where all the options are either bad or involve great risk, the more *virtù* our leaders may need in order to deceive them. [...] While suspicion of power has been central to the American Creed, president and military commanders will have to regain breathing space from media assaults to deal with the challenges of split-second decision making in future warfare. (Kaplan, 2002, p. 63)

### **From the Left**

Ikeda presents a radically different “soft” approach in Soka Gakkai International’s 2004 Peace Proposal, “Inner Transformation: Creating a Global Groundswell for Peace,” suggesting a path of self-mastery.

What must be done to forestall the risk, inherent in the essential asymmetry of a "war" against terrorism, that it will become a deadly quagmire? Since it is probably unrealistic to expect self-restraint on the part of the terrorists, those who oppose them must put priority on the exercise of self-mastery—a quality that grows from the effort to consider and understand the position of the "other." This effort must take precedence over the use of hard power. Equally essential are the courage and vision to address the underlying conditions of poverty and injustice that are enabling factors in terrorism. (Ikeda, 2004)

### **Roles in a Field**

Each of these preceding statements, and the seemingly rigid positions, can be seen as roles. The practice of viewing these positions as roles helps us to be more fluid and reminds us that each of spokesperson is actually stating something that is far more complex and fluid than any one rigid role can express. In essence, a person is larger than the role that she is momentarily occupying, and each role is generally larger and more complex than can be represented by any one person at any given moment.

### **The Hegemon**

For example, Kaplan's statements can be interpreted as a role that says something like the following: Globalization is Darwinian and the political, technological, and economic system will determine who is and who is not fit for survival. The media will not go along with this view. They will delude the people with abstract universal principles. The

purpose of power is not power itself. It is the fundamentally liberal purpose of maintaining an orderly world.

Precisely because they [democracies] foment dynamic change, liberal empires [...] create the conditions for their own demise. Thus they must be especially devious. [...] [The] President and military commanders will have to regain breathing space from media assaults to deal with the challenges of split-second decision making in future warfare.” [...] Consequently, if we are to get our way, and at the same time to promote our democratic principles, we will have to operate nimbly, in the shadows and behind closed doors, using means far less obvious than the august array of power displayed in the air and ground war against Iraq. [...] for the time being the highest morality must be the preservation—and, wherever prudent, the accretion—of American power. (Kaplan, 2003)

Taken in one context I see these statements as paralleling the Darwinian aspirations of Nazi Germany, and I find myself hating Kaplan and his views—I have become the other. Taken in another context, behind Kaplan’s views is a high dream for a better world. I may not want to support his tactics, but I may want to support his high dream. What is it?

[Those democratic principles] include basic political stability; the idea of liberty, pragmatically conceived; respect for property; economic freedom; and representative government, culturally understood. At this moment in time it is American power, and American power only, that can serve as an organizing principle for the worldwide expansion of a liberal civil society. (Kaplan, 2003)

Again I find myself challenged to go deep enough to be able to understand Kaplan without hating his ideas. What part do I hate the most? “Liberty, *pragmatically conceived*” means liberty to conform. “Respect for property” increases with the centrality of the property owner, “economic freedom” without restraints supports empirical interests, “Representative government, *culturally understood*” means hegemony. Now I can understand Kaplan without hating his ideas. How do I also have a part who wants to dictate the actions and restrict the freedoms of others? How do I want to live in a world that conforms to my own cultural assumptions and norms?

Generalizing greatly: People tend to be in favor of freedom and against repression, which makes it difficult for them to catch the subtle ways in which their views actually support repression and the curtailment of other’s freedoms. I take this as an opportunity for an innerwork exercise, hoping that it will teach me something about myself and help me gain a little increased fluidity. In a sense my days are easier when the world around me conforms to my expectations. It is less challenging for me to be here in Portland than it is to be on the streets of Delhi. Similarly, my days are also easier when others naturally conform to my desires and respond positively to my ideas and requests. In short, given the opportunity, I will dominate any given relationship as well as the entire world. Furthermore, in my frustration with things that stand against me, and my occasional arrogant assumptions that I am right, I know that I have occasionally fantasized about the immediate removal of people who did not agree with me. Ahha! I am Kaplan. I understand the role better now. “Those people will never change, so there is no point in trying to have a philosophical discourse with them. Furthermore they are violent and must be dealt with, by means that must remain private and out of the media and away from the

eye of public scrutiny. There is a rationale to this position that is supported by historical memory and the thinking of great men all the way back to Plato, Homer, and Sun-Tzu.” In fact, the only thing that has kept me from removing a few people from the planet is that I also have a role that is very much against it. I was not congruent in my anger, hatred, or detached rational “objectivity.” For that I am very grateful, but I want to explore that side as well. Is it also one-sided?

### **The Prophet**

Daisaku Ikeda says that “dialogue is the key to surmounting cultural and philosophical boundaries and forging the mutual trust and understanding necessary for lasting peace” (Galtung & Ikeda, 1995, p. viii). Buddhism, Ikeda says, “transcends the dimension on which all phenomena are perceived as interrelated and reveals the dynamism of the universal life on which all interrelations depend,” and that can be used to resolve conflict (Galtung & Ikeda, 1995, p. 84). “... attempting to trace primary causes of evil to external factors invites tragedy and slaughter. Transcending inner evil is both our most urgent duty for the twenty-first century and the essential goal of all reform movements.” (Galtung & Ikeda, 1995, p. 61-2) This view could be represented by the writings of many different figures: bell hooks, Gandhi, Dr. King, etc.

Is this absolute truth, spiritual wisdom, or merely a seductive metamyth? That question reflects another role: the judge. For the moment, rather than judging Ikeda’s position, I want to begin by finding this role in myself. This is difficult because I have a reaction against the dualistic language. If it is “evil” then it is other than me and it is not me, even if it is somehow within me.

## The Elder

I can imagine another role, that of an elder who would know how to speak to the hegemon as well as to the prophet in a way that would simultaneously support both positions. For example, in the 2004 US presidential election debates President Bush attacked John Kerry for flip-flopping, and Kerry attacked Bush for stubbornly staying to a course that had been shown to be wrong. Max Schupbach, a process work teacher, conflict facilitator, and organizational consultant, maintains that

both positions are important to us watching, because we need both in our lives. Those of us, who have a hard time to stay with our own inner experience and sense of who we are and where we are at, will (at least secretly) admire someone who seems to be able to do that: stay on course, even if criticized. Those of us who have a hard time to give our own inner world temporarily up and experience ourselves as members of a larger community and follow the feedback of other, will (at least secretly) admire someone who shows more flexibility. (Schupbach, 2004)

The one who flip-flops and the one who stays a steady course are roles. Developing both can be useful, particularly if the less known role is developed to the point where it can be accessed fluidly with awareness. Schupbach models a way to use role fluidity to coach one of the candidates. Instead of trashing President Bush, for example, John Kerry could highlight Bush's behavior as a strength and add his own style.

Imagine if Kerry had said something like the following:

Yes, I admire the president for being able to stay on his course, and to stay true to his own experience, regardless of the popularity. I also aspire

to that and have often done so. In addition, the feedback of my people is important to me, if it doesn't work for you, it can't work for me, that's why its called a democracy. If together we don't waver from the path of democracy, we will be strong, even if at times we show that part of this democracy is debate, and even if we show that inner democracy means that we have these debates ourselves. I am not every moment of the day convinced that my viewpoint is the right one, and you don't want a president who is free from inner conflicts. You want a president who understands the inner conflicts as part of being in a community with others, and an opportunity to find balance in one's action. (Schupbach, 2004)

Or, imagine that President Bush had said something like this:

I admire Senator Kerry for being so fluid and for following the signals from various groups and individuals, regardless of the popularity of that path with others. I also aspire to that and have often done so as well.

The signals and feedback of the American people, as well as all of the world's people, are important to me. That is what democracy is all about.

If together we follow the path of deepening public discourse as we converge on policies that will provide stability, prosperity, and security; we will be strong even as we show that part of truly deep democracy is about being fluid, and even as we show that inner democracy means that although we have these debates ourselves we sometimes have to stand for our

deepest truths and our greatest eldership, no matter how unpopular they may be with some individuals.

I am not every moment of the day convinced that my viewpoint is the right one, and you don't want a president who is free from inner conflicts. You want a president who understands inner conflict as part of democracy, who strives to find balance in her actions, who suffers over her metaskills and decisions, and who ultimately is not afraid at times to stand up for what she believes in and follow a difficult course in perilous times.

### **The State as a Role**

A group, organization, or nation can itself occupy a role in the larger field. For example, in [The Breaking of Nations: Order and Chaos in the Twenty-First Century](#) Robert Cooper argues that there are three types of states:

- Lawless “pre-modern” states such as Somalia and Afghanistan;
- “modern” states—such as China, Brazil, and India—that straightforwardly pursue their national interests;
- And “post-modern states” such as those in the EU and Japan, that operate on the basis of openness, law, and mutual security.

The United States, Cooper argues, has yet to decide whether to embrace the post-modern world of interdependence, or pursue unilateralism and power politics (R. Cooper, 2003). In the sense that democracy is a form of openness, it is interesting that in this sense the United States remains undecided in terms of embracing a larger arena of democratic involvement. That choice involves choosing between imperial hegemony and a balance of power.

International order used to be based either on hegemony or on balance. Hegemony came first. In the ancient world, order meant empire: Alexander's Empire, the Roman Empire, the Mogul, Ottoman or Chinese Empires. The choice, for the ancient and medieval worlds, was between empire and chaos. In those days imperialism was not yet a dirty word. Those within the empire had order, culture and civilization. Outside the empire were barbarians, chaos and disorder. (R. Cooper, 2003, p. 7)

But since the collapse of the Soviet Union and prior to the emergence of a competing power, there is at this time no other state to rival the US. We have become Hobbes's Leviathan (Hobbes, 2004).<sup>6</sup> Cooper highlights a metamyth that rival states would "by some semiautomatic Newtonian process" find an equilibrium that would prevent any one nation from dominating the others (R. Cooper, 2003, p. 9). This metamyth retains a powerful hold on historical imagination. Is it only through balance between rival states that stability can be achieved? Is there a quantum process of deep democracy wherein a global empire can support the diversity and autonomy that might prevent the experience of oppression and hegemony?

Diversity creates competition, and competition creates, "sometimes in the form of war, ... a source of social, political and technological progress" (R. Cooper, 2003, p. 9). Are there viable alternatives to war that do not involve military dominance or a race of philosophers?

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<sup>6</sup> Leviathan: "For by art is created that great Leviathan called a commonwealth, or state (in Latin, *Civitas*), which is but an artificial man, though of greater stature and strength than the natural, for whose protection and defence it was intended . . ." (2004).

## A Philosophy of Deep Democracy & Sustainable Community

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*The cure for the ailments of democracy is more democracy*

—John Dewey

In her 1999 treatise, “*Deep Democracy: Community, Diversity, and Transformation*,” Judith Green, a philosophy professor at Fordham University, maintains that “*sustainable transformation requires the development of a deeper democracy*” [italics hers] (Green, 1999, p. 202). A deeper democracy that “expresses the experience-based possibility of more equal, respectful, and mutually beneficial ways of community life and ‘habits of the heart’” (Green, 1999, p. vi).

She sees the current political “democracy” as comprising a  
[. . .] sustained political impasse among rival groups who use “formally”  
democratic processes in attempts to coercively impose their preferred  
responses to various interactive problems of economic marginalization,  
environmental degradation, and cultural stagnation (Green, 1999, p.203).

She notes that “these long-term adversarial struggles have come to the point where anybody can stop anything, and typically does” (Green, 1999, p.203). This situations leads to suboptimal solutions, increasing frustration, and deepening marginalization of various subgroups. Green states that the underlying problem is the “inadequacy of the formal conception of democratic due process” (Green, 1999, p. 203), and the habit of not listening to members of opposition groups—which Green maintains is based on an assumption that there can be no common good, only adversarial goods. This situation is, according to Green, “existentially unsustaining and culturally unsustainable” (Green, 1999, p. vii).

Public decision making processes are often intensely painful. Kemmis notes that the public arena often loses important participants because of “the ever more frequent withdrawal of people from all public involvement—either because they are frustrated with the pattern of blocked initiative or because they don’t like shrillness and indignation, in themselves or in others” (Kemmis, 1992, p. 62). We act as if we did not have a “mutual stake in the shape of one another’s lives” (Kemmis, 1992, p. 66): e.g., we are unrelated, and do not actively support a value system that includes a deeper level of interconnectedness, i.e., deep democracy.

The solution can not be to form a coalition with other like-minded advocates of deep democracy, an approach which essentially brings yet another adversarial group into the system. Unfortunately, that is often what many so called peace, spiritual, and social-action groups do. Even those groups that stand for “love,” are essentially against the other interests groups and their tactics. The oppositional “against” nature of their actions is apt to be experienced as aggression and not as the more loving approach it purports to be. Sustainable transformation requires the development of a deeper democracy, but what does deeper democracy look like? Green puts attention on “re-educating local participants’ hearts and minds in the ways of deep democracy” but does not say how to do this, nor does she describe the actual techniques involved in the practice of deep democracy (Green, 1999, p. 199). She describes a certain form of community that is environmentally as well as socially sustainable. But what is meant by community?

Often, the experience of community, that being a sort of warm comforting experience, is actually a high dream that marginalizes experiences, ideas, groups, and people that do not go along with the context of the community norms. The ideal of

community denies diversity “in privileging face-to-face relations unmediated by time and distance, and in contrasting the problematic present with a utopian alternative future without specifying a transformational process that links them” (Green, 1999, p. 2).

What is a more practical form of community? What did the philosopher John Dewey mean when he argued for a self-conscious public (Dewey, 1954)? Green says that the democratic ideal is a “normative guide for the development of diversity-respecting unity in habits of the heart that are shaped and corrected by reflective inquiry” (Green, 1999, p. ix). What are the processes of inquiry and education that support a realistic, historically grounded ideal community?

### **Memory & the Collective Unconscious**

*Just as identity is inseparable from group feedback,  
so all behavior is interdependent.*

*—Thomas Cooper*

Cornell West’s examination of ontological rootlessness, and what the classical American pragmatic philosopher Josiah Royce called communities of memory and hope, point to a disconnection that is often assumed to be a contemporary phenomenon (West, 2004). However, Plato warned that

discovery of the alphabet will create forgetfulness in the learners’ souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves... You give your disciples not truth but only the semblance of truth; they will be hearers of many things and will have learned nothing; they will appear omniscient and will generally know nothing; they will be tiresome company, having the

show of wisdom without the reality. (Plato, quoted in (T. W. Cooper, 1998))

What is this stuff that the modern literate learners' souls have forgotten? A more contemporary sage, Mamoudou Konyate, a Mali shaman speaks to that which is missing in literate cultures:

Other people use writing to record the past, but this invention has killed the faculty of memory among them. They do not feel the past anymore, for writing lacks the warmth of the human voice. With them, everybody thinks he knows, whereas learning should be a secret. The prophets did not write and their words have been all the more vivid as a result. What paltry learning is that which is congealed in dumb books. (Konyate, quoted in (T. W. Cooper, 1998))

This is perhaps an extreme view and there certainly may be other opinions. However, remember that this is a Mali shaman, an indigenous elder, who must be trying to understand what it is that has made mainstream western culture so lacking in relatedness to the earth, the environment, and to others.

Freud wrote of a collectively psychotic humanity, a concept that Carl Jung further developed in a 1934 writing:

A more or less superficial layer of the unconscious is undoubtedly personal. I call it the personal unconscious. But this personal unconscious rests upon a deeper layer, which does not derive from personal experience and is not a personal acquisition but is inborn. This deeper layer I call the *collective unconscious*... It is, in other words, identical in all men [and

women] and thus constitutes a common psychic substrate of a suprapersonal nature which is present in every one of us. (Jung, 1968, p. 3)

Freud wrote:

If we consider mankind as a whole and substitute it for a single individual, we discover that it too has developed delusions which are inaccessible to logical criticism and which contradict reality. If, in spite of this, they (the delusions) are able to exert an extraordinary power over men [or women], investigation leads us to the same explanations as in the case of the single individual. They owe their power to the element of *historical truth* which they have brought up from the repression of the forgotten and primeval past. (Freud, 1964, p. 257-69)

Seeking to understand six hundred year discrepancies between Egyptian and Israeli records and ancient accounts of celestial and terrestrial traumas, a psychoanalyst, Immanuel Velikovsky, argued that humanity acts like an amnesia victim seeking to repress traumatic experience (Velikovsky, 1982). Velikovsky saw humanity as conveniently remembering its progress after devolution but not remembering the disturbing catastrophes it had suffered or the losses to culture or consciousness. In other words, humanity is unaware of its collective amnesia and its collective unconscious. The consequences of this lack of awareness may explain the willingness by some to attack their enemies, rather than to try and find more related solutions to the conflicts.

### **Cross Cultural Communication Styles**

Each specific cultural context provides a different lens through which to view the problematic historical present. For example:

“Some rules [of communication] relate to a subtle spiritual understanding seemingly less common in Western society. For example, among the Maori, it is impolite to ask direct questions, not because of arbitrary custom but because “the *mana* flows from the greater person to the lesser. To question is to usurp the *mana* and take charge of the flow” (Cooper’s interview, Ritchie 1/11/91). All communication takes place in the energy field of *mana*. Thus rules of communication derive from a respect for the sacred, and for those carrying the greatest *mana*. (T. W. Cooper, 1998)

Being aware of and supporting various cultural communication norms is a part of deep democracy. These standards differ wildly along cultural, class, and racial lines. For example, in the United States, working class people are often frustrated by higher class people and their tendency to respond to impassioned statements with calm, low tones. In general, more marginalized groups are often freer to use more heated styles of communication. Styles and assumptions about their use vary wildly.

For example, , a group of researchers proposed that the following teachings are universal to all native American tribes (Bopp, Lane, Brown, & Bopp, 1985):

1. The practice of daily sanctification.
2. A respect, honor, and esteem for all life. This manifests in never putting anyone down, not walking between conversing parties, not touching another’s possession, not interrupting, speaking softly, genuinely listening, loving, and protecting all natural environments,

honoring the religions of others, and never speaking unkindly of others.

3. Honor for the tribal council. One may submit personal ideas to the council, but then must let go of any personal agenda and respect all other ideas. Once the council has reached consensus, one must never speak against group policy.
4. One must be truthful at all times and under all conditions within the tribe. Ethics in communication held by various Indigenous cultures maintain that, “A person who does not speak truth must not know reality, and thus is to be pitied.”
5. Show extraordinary hospitality, giving guests only your best food, accommodation, blankets, drink and so on.
6. One must empathize with others’ feelings and know the spirit of the whole.
7. One must receive strangers and outsiders with a loving heart and as members of the human family.
8. All races are beautiful creations of the Creator, one family worth of respect.
9. Do not fill yourself with personal affairs, but remember the meaning of life is only known in serving others.
10. Observe moderation and balance in all matters.
11. Understand all that leads to personal well-being and all that leads to destruction.

12. Follow the guidance given to one's heart, whether in dreams, prayer, solitude, or from wise elders and friends.

Clearly such an ethic has specific moral standards for communication. These include:

1. listening fully with the heart, no matter how trivial or wrong the discussion may seem;
2. not interrupting another's communication;
3. not walking between conversants;
4. speaking softly, especially to elders;
5. speaking only by invitation when among a group of elders;
6. avoiding slander and defamation of all kinds;
7. communicating as an individual (contributing independent ideas to the council) first, then communicating in synch with the group (once policies have been set);
8. truth-telling;
9. *inner* communicating (morning and evening sanctification, periods of guidance) must precede outer communicating, openness to the Great Spirit is essential;
10. communicating with the whole tribe or whole earth in mind so as to honor others.

To many other people and cultures, these "rules" would seem oppressive. There would be no consensus for communication along these lines. That may result in a willingness to break the rules of the first group that would be experienced as disrespectful

and inflammatory. For example, Cornell West argues that “We are losing the very value of dialogue—especially respectful communication—in the name of the sheer force of naked power” (West, 2004, p. 7). In this case, however, he is referring to political dialogue in the between various factions. Imposing rules of “respectfulness” is one way to silence marginalized groups.

The major culprit here is not “political correctness,” a term coined by those who tend to trivialize the scars of others and minimize the suffering of victims while highlighting their own wounds. Rather, the challenge is mustering the courage to scrutinize *all* forms of dogmatic policing of dialogue and to shatter all authoritarian strategies of silencing voices. (West, 2004, p. 7)

## **Social Activism**

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The concept of deep democracy is rapidly becoming part of the lexicon of social action, although the term has come to be defined in many different ways. The Co-Intelligence Institute leads projects providing trainings in “deep democracy and community wisdom” (Co-Intelligence Institute, 2004). The Deep Democracy Network Project web site says “Deep Democracy is the self-reflective, compassionate, and inclusive participation in the social construction of social reality” (The Deep Democracy Network Project, 2004). In “Building Deep Democracy: The Story of a Grass Roots Learning Organization in South Africa”:

Deep democracy, as we see it, does not privilege the concept of community by reifying it into a single set of values and norms to which the individual must subordinate him or herself. Rather deep democracy

describes an open dynamic system springing from the diverse points of engagement where individuals and community come together. Deep democracy is a transformative process in which the individual learns to think and act from the perspective of the whole. In deep democracy, citizenship is conferred by personal engagement—not just by revealing individual preferences through voting and rational choice, but by exercising the democratic arts of participation. It is based on public conversation, where one begins to listen to and know the “other.” It becomes the enfranchisement of the self in daily life, transforming one’s self identity into one of inclusion in, and responsibility for, an expanding circle of community. (Wilson & Lowery, 2003)

Dr. Barbara Marx Hubbard, founder and president of The Foundation for Conscious Evolution and advisor to Peace X Peace,<sup>7</sup> “explores democracy at a rich level where every citizen is both represented and responsible” (Peace X Peace, 2004). She defines deep democracy as, “the new field in which the human family is learning to live in harmony with nature, with one another, and with the deeper patterns of creation, or God” (Hubbard, 2004). Deep democracy, like peace, is a verb. Colleen Kelly says, “Peace is a verb. It’s active, and it involves the choices we make every day. (Peace X Peace, 2004)”

Dr. Patricia Wilson, a professor of community planning with the University of Texas, writing for the Shambhala Institute for Authentic Leadership, describes deep democracy as follows:

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<sup>7</sup> PEACE X PEACE empowers women to build sustainable peace locally and globally through connection, recognition, and education. See [www.peacexpeace.org](http://www.peacexpeace.org).

What happens when you take the tools of dialogue, systems thinking, learning communities, presencing, and profound change, and apply them to civic engagement? The result is deep democracy—an organizing principle based on the transformation of separation to interconnectedness in the civic arena. Deep democracy is not what elected representatives do, nor experts, nor large public institutions, nor voters. At its essence, deep democracy is the inner experience of interconnectedness. ... the core practice of dialogue can be deepened until we are listening beyond the words to our own and others' needs, feelings, assumptions and frames; and even deeper until we are listening together to the silence, to the heartbeat of the whole, to what is wanting to emerge and be born. At this point we are listening not with the ear, but with the mind, the heart, and the body. We are listening to the deepest faculty of inner knowing. (Wilson, 2004)

Oren Lyons, Faithkeeper of the Turtle Clan of the Onandaga Iroquois, describes the traditional tribal council approach to dealing with conflict through dialogue and inner knowing: "We meet and just keep talking until there's nothing left but the obvious truth" (Tao of Democracy, 2004). What approaches can be taken when there is no cultural container to make this possible, or when this approach does not work even in a tribal setting?

Losers, Green notes, in adversarial struggles change or relocate from the system, but do not change their views because of being outvoted (Green, 1999, p. 216). The

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polarity remains unresolved and the adversarial polar opposites, the roles, continue to be in opposition and will continue to resurface: albeit in another time, another frame, or in another place. Frequently the conflict escalates due to the frustration created from the experience of having been downed or marginalized. Arguing for a general model of deep democracy's inclusion of all stakeholders in "devising mutually satisfactory solutions to shared problems," Green maintains that "*only shared hopes are stable*" (Green, 1999, p. 216).

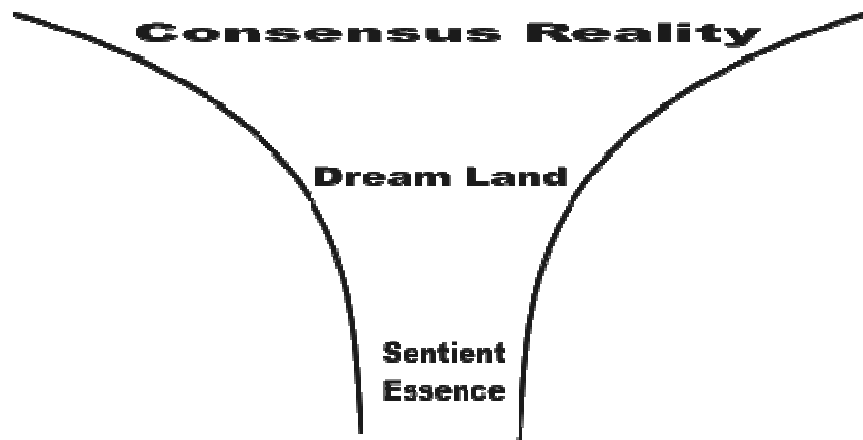
Shared hopes are high dreams that exist at a deeper level of consciousness than our normal everyday identify. As such, they pattern behavior, but do so without benefit of awareness being made available to the system.

Given the obstacles to deeply democratic transformations—and the long period of time they take—only a transformative approach that can *sustain deeply committed, intelligently directed, situationally responsive, trust-based cooperative struggle beyond the horizon of immediate and foreseeable events* can achieve this goal. This is why the *human existential needs* and the *democratic impulse* that motivate people's initial involvement in democratic transformative struggle carry within them *an ideal directionality toward the deeply democratic community*. Our experience suggests that this developmental process must be understood as progressively embracing *cosmopolitan unity amidst valued diversity*, increasingly energized as *the Beloved Community*. (Green, 1999, p. 216)

*In a democracy,  
the whole assembly cannot fail  
unless the multitude that are to be governed fail.*  
—(Hobbes, 2004)

What are the processes of inquiry and education that support the *Beloved Community*: a realistic, historically grounded ideal community? Is the meta-myth of a self-conscious public a utopian fallacy? Dr. King wrote, “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny” (King, 1963, p. 77). The *Beloved Community* is at once a deeply personal and an archetypically collective process.

In the following description of deep democracy Arny Mindell refers to CR (consensus reality—the level of consciousness we generally share with others wherein a cigar is just a cigar), dreamland (a symbolic level of consciousness where roles, archetypes, and dream figures interact wherein a cigar may be many things depending on the dreamer’s associations and process), and sentient essence (the deepest level of conscious experience where the deepest faculty of inner knowing resides (where there are no longer any cigars, only the basic essence of the symbol from the dreamland level):



**Figure 1: Levels of Consciousness (Mindell, 1996)**

Each of us has or should form their own understanding of deep democracy. In my mind, it is a multileveled experience, as well as a political program. As an experience, at the consensual level, rank and hierarchy appear whenever you feel inflated or depressed, powerful or terrified, that is, more or less than someone else. Rank is the overt or subtle background to the feelings in a given situation in which you or others rank what is happening. Rankism, that is, the conscious or unconscious use of power without feedback over others—is the mother of all (CR [consensus reality]) "isms," which strongly differ in content but are similar in the hurt they cause. Unconscious or conscious use of rank is the core of all internecine struggles; it's deadly. We all need to watch for this.

In Dreamland,<sup>8</sup> since you are the other person, and since dreamland roles are non-local—that means, spread out everywhere in the universe at any given moment—in my opinion rank no longer has absolute

significance. Rather, rank becomes exchangeable, entirely relative and momentary, almost insignificant. Finally at the non-dual essence level of experience, we are all one with a creative "stardust," call it what you want, which gave birth to everything else. From here, there are no separate things, only a oneness. As long as there is a fight between one level, say the essence or the dreamland level and the CR level, deep democracy is not at work. Rank and no rank exist simultaneously. Understanding the simultaneous and paradoxical experiences of each level is what distinguishes deep democracy from politics, psychology, or religion—at least in their most mainstream forms where reality is rated more than spirituality, or the reverse, or where individual process is seen as more significant than collective process—or the reverse. Well... all this is abbreviated... and off the top of my head—it's not written in stone! (Mindell, 2002)

Dr. Mindell's approach to integrating quantum physics with psychology bridges the gap between science and philosophy, and shamanism and mysticism. This approach, which he calls Worldwork, starts, in a sense, at home and involves a tradition of deeper personal exploration, inner work, relationship and community work, wherein people, community members, and would be facilitators practice developing their own awareness and fluidity (the ability to shapeshift from one role or viewpoint to another).<sup>9</sup> This path of learning involves developing an attitude of openness towards other people and their feelings,

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<sup>8</sup> Dreamland: A symbolic level of consciousness made up of archetypal and dream like figures, i.e., the oppressor, a negative father, a powerful wolf, a lava flow, a red car.

<sup>9</sup> Worldwork also refers to process work training and research seminars in facilitating large group process on issues of oppression and conflict. See [www.worldwork.org](http://www.worldwork.org)

experience, and opinions; as well as towards various roles, dream figures, and states of consciousness. It is what Carlos Castaneda called a path of a warrior (Castaneda, 1972) because it involves developing an openness to a certain kind of psychological death wherein one's own momentary experience, though important, is no longer important in the way that it used to be. There is a kind of ego death that enables an individual to support the views of others, as well as her or his own, in a way that promotes an openness to intimacy, to relatedness, and to change, which allows for the whole community to work together to be able to find momentary solutions to each of the ongoing conflicts with which it is faced.

With a background in physics and psychology, Dr. Mindell developed what was originally known as dreambody work<sup>10</sup> and came to be known as process oriented psychology, or process work for short. His experiences working on therapeutic life issues such as illness, body symptoms, relationship conflicts, and dreams with individual clients led to cross-cultural work with large groups working on issues such as racism, sexism, classism, and gay and lesbian issues—Worldwork evolved through viewing the world itself as a client (Mindell, 1992, p. 4).

Some, including Johan Galtung (who is considered to be the father of peace studies and is a winner of the Right Livelihood Award, the alternative Nobel prize) disagrees with the efficacy of large group process:

Although they have value of their own, debates involving large numbers of people are less useful. As the French philosopher Henri

Bergson (1859-1941) once said, discussion among more than 25 people is fruitless. The more numerous the participants, the less likely are the exchanges to be sincere. (Galtung & Ikeda, 1995, p. 39-40)

However, Mindell found that if he shifted from goal oriented thinking of debate—which is intent on “solving” the conflict and achieving momentary resolution—in favor of an awareness based approach intent on understanding the conflict, dynamics, motivations, concerns, feelings, and signals of the conflicted parties then something more interesting and more sustainable happened. The individuals and groups began to understand themselves better. They were more able to be fluid, momentarily shifting their thinking to be able to understand the positions of others. They began to understand their own motivations and assumptions, the role their ego and self confidence played, their prior experiences in conflict, emotional wounds and humiliations, their sense of their own power. They began to understand these things about the people on the other side of the conflict. And they began to be able to work together to develop their own sustainable process of working on conflict.

Mindell found that his awareness based worldwork skills only worked when he was at peace inwardly. Many spiritual traditions view the maintenance of an inner attitude of love as a panacea. However, realizing that he was rarely in a normal state of consciousness while in the midst of heated conflict, Army viewed inner mastery as the *sine qua non*, a starting point for development of awareness based interventions:

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<sup>10</sup> **Dreambody:** Refers to the dream like qualities of the apparently physical manifestation of the body, and to energetic manifestation of the body’s non-physical, spiritual, or quantum field counterpart.

Our challenge is to carefully develop [...] conflict resolution skills so that they reflect democratic principles and are widely applicable.

Worldwork methods must not assume that the responsible facilitators and leaders are always centered. Process facilitators, group instructors, business executives, psychologists, politicians, and teachers are rarely in neutral or normal states of consciousness, even at business meetings. Worldwork must not be limited to inner peace or outer equilibrium but must apply to real situations where there are chaos and attack, transformation and conflict.

... the tools of worldwork can only succeed with the attitude of deep democracy, that special feeling of belief in the inherent importance of all parts of ourselves and all viewpoints in the world around us. (Mindell, 1992, p. 5)

Mindell says that “the tools of worldwork can only succeed with the attitude of deep democracy, that special feeling of belief in the inherent importance of all parts of ourselves and all viewpoints in the world around us” and “Deep democracy is our sense that the world is here to help us become our entire selves, and that we are here to help the world become whole” (Mindell, 1992, p. 5). Development of the feeling sense of deep democracy and belief in the importance of supporting a deeper dialogue are not easy. This development involves a psychological or spiritual growth process for those of us who were not born gifted with the awareness of a Bodhisattva. Deep democracy is not sufficient in and of itself to deal with world situations. It is not a panacea. And the techniques of awareness based worldwork facilitation techniques “become meaningless in the hands of

those without the necessary inner development, without a sense of deep democracy”  
(Mindell, 1992, p. 5).

Deep democracy is based upon those perennial psychologies and philosophies that include global, egalitarian approaches to personal problems. It is any form of bodywork that encourages us to understand our feelings and movements as global spirits asking for resolution. And it is that type of dreamwork that realizes that images do not belong only to us personally. Deep democracy is found in relationship work when we consider not only what we are saying but also what our bodies are doing. Deep democracy occurs in groups when we notice how group and political conflicts are connected to the spirit of the times.  
(Mindell, 1992, p. 5-6)

## **Safety**

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As group size increases, often the heat gets turned up as well because various individuals feel the support of their colleagues as well as the pain of the ancestors. As the heat increases safety becomes an increasingly important concern.

Days after 9-11, Peace X Peace founder Patricia Smith Melton invited several extraordinary women to participate in a three day peace dialogue. That original circle of women met from January 19<sup>th</sup> through 21<sup>st</sup>, 2002. The following comments are excerpted from their dialogue:

Susan: We don't have to have a consensus. We need to be able to express ourselves and to be able to differ, and at the same time to be seeking our commonalities. [. . .]

Susan: What often happens in conflict is the cause of the conflict gets completely lost in the posturing, and events move

forward, and people get stuck. One of the things we need to think about is how do you get people unstuck?

Isabel: A shift is required.

Susan: How do we get to where that shift into wholeness can happen when people are stuck in fragments?

Isabel: We need a safe place where people can talk.

Barbara: Whenever you create a space where there is a certain amount of safety and respect and deep sharing and compassionate listening, people tend to get the next level, to reach it and to resonant within it. This is a circle. I believe in the circle as a means of engendering peace at whatever level is possible. (Peace X Peace, 2004)

What is meant by safety? A training manual used by the Institute for Multi Track

Diplomacy comments further on safety:

1. Create Safe Space. Safe space refers to the environment—psychological as well as physical—of the dialogue. Only when people feel safe will be they be willing to go beyond debate to true dialogue, which involves touching many layers of wisdom and meaning.

If groups in dialogue are in a strongly conflictual relationship, their sense of safety may be enhanced by having an impartial third party present, who can be trusted to facilitate the process and be there should things get "too hot." (Diamond, 1996, p. 43)

But what is meant by “too hot?” This question, and the questions that follow, may have no single clear answer. But there is a deeper discussion behind them that any group, community, or circle will have to explore for themselves.

- What safety is needed?
- Should there be any limits to “heat” (the expression of strong emotion)?
- When is there a different degree of protection and care in limiting heat that needs to be afforded from those who have suffered extreme violent conflict?
- Is psychological “safety” an illusion of the privileged? Only? Or do we all need some form of safety? Does the form that takes vary depending upon our privilege, experience, and personal development?
- Is it the role of a facilitator to provide safety where it is not politically correct for one side to mention it, want it, or ask for it?
- What message does a participant’s concern for safety send? “I’m not willing to feel uncomfortable?” Or is there something more substantive behind it—perhaps a message that says, “I have suffered too. I have also been hurt. And I would also like to know that you can hear that about me.”

Safety is a process that needs to be addressed by the facilitators. When someone says that things are “too hot,” that experience needs to be supported so that it can become more transparent. Otherwise the dialogue risks becoming potentially abusive to one side. Others may disagree and feel that the level of heat in dialogue is nothing compared to the level of abuse and atrocity that they have suffered. That too needs to be said. A facilitator needs to be able to facilitate the heat and the fear of it, while also making sure that the heat

and the reaction against it does not stop the dialogue and the expression of the feelings, views, and the reactions.

At times there is a need for someone to come forward as a protector. This is often crucial in processing issues of trauma and abuse. As a facilitator it is sometimes easy to get hypnotized into supporting the more obviously marginalized group. But in conflict, people on all sides have likely been traumatized and need to be protected. Even if the attacker is “only” a symbolic dream figure, it is still quite hurtful. When the heat is too high, there is a risk that people will become (re)-traumatized, dissociate, or react violently. The reaction may be against themselves in symptoms or extreme states, or against the other verbally, emotionally, or physically. The reaction may result in further violence against the more marginalized group.

Over the past ten years I have seen many extremely emotional encounters in peace, dialogue, and conflict groups (and in life). There has always been an unstated atmosphere that supports strong expression by marginalized people against more mainstream or more dominant people (who they see as oppressors). Is this warrior training?

There is one attitude that says, “finally I can hit back and they have to take it because of everything they have done.” But this attitude momentarily reverses the rank and dominance roles, and continues the cycle victimization. Where is the balance between constructive levels of expression and protection for all parties involved? How close need a group come to the line beyond which there is increased risk of psychic carnage?

Safety is a complex issue involving many perspectives. It is not a program, or a static condition that can be mandated, even by a facilitator. Safety is an experience, one which is

of concern to everyone as we are all vulnerable at different times and in diverse ways. Arny Mindell maintains that safety is a perception that depends upon

[. . .] age, health, gender, sexual orientation, culture, dreams, nationality, and so forth. For example, if something is marginalized or rejected by your conscious mind, you are constantly afraid and "in danger" of a reaction from that "something" within yourself, often projected onto the outside world.

(Mindell, 2002)

The experience of safety is often reversed in conflict forums: particularly those involving clear distinctions between marginalized and dominant groups. More marginalized people, who are used to feeling unsafe in the world, may find that they now feel relatively safe as they confront their "oppressors" directly and find support for the expression of their stories, feelings, fears, and tragedies. Often, this surfaces in the form of a didactic polemic, at times intended not only to educate and to transform, but to harm. And why should they not? Conversely, why should the oppressed now have to "take care of" the oppressors, by silencing themselves to prevent the more mainstream, privileged, or dominant group from their own uncomfortable feelings?

Discernment of an intent to harm is a complex issue. The use of communication styles and strong levels of emotional expression that are appropriate in one group's culture and situation may be experienced as aggression by another group. Furthermore, the normal experience of safety is often reversed in conflict groups because the more dominant group may anticipate a retaliation that they, at least in part, know is justified. All of these experiences are important and need to be felt, expressed, and understood.

Thus, a complex dynamic arises when one group or individual explores marginalization, and also her feelings of pride, power and ability to speak about that which has never been said before. Speaking out creates all sorts of feelings in everyone. Some are afraid; others are touched so deeply, they are moved to tears. In the sense of deep democracy, each and everyone's feelings are important as part of the emerging community awareness process. This process increases everyone's sense of safety as awareness of rank and privilege, power and its abuses comes forward. [. . .]

That facilitator who by the grace of someone's god has managed, together with her community, to raise awareness to the point where ghost roles and voices that cannot speak are represented, who watches in a moment to moment manner the way in which deep democracy unfolds, makes the term "safety" seem like a totally inadequate word. Better terms for such awareness processes are "Community," or "sense of meaning," "belonging," "sense of life's task" as well as all ancient and perennial human goals. (Mindell, 2000)

## **The Inner Jihad**

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We know, in the case of the person,  
that whoever cannot tell himself [or herself] the truth about his past  
is trapped in it,  
is immobilized in the prison of his undiscovered self.  
This is also true of nations.

—James Baldwin (Baldwin, 1998, p. 670)

Arnold Toynbee wrote, “the present threat to mankind’s survival can be removed only by a revolutionary change of heart in individual human beings” (Toynbee & Ikeda,

1989, p. 63). However, Geoffrey Hartman, a literary critic, maintains that “in our century hate is being reinvented” (Hartman, 1999, p. 251). The propagandic use of hate as a political weapon is being more finely honed than ever before (Chomsky, 2002) (Bernays, 1955).

Because repression and the guilt or shame that accompany it are common psychological facts in civilized society, the hate released [when propaganda frees people from the taboo against hatred] is massive. But it feels like a renewal of virility, like breaking through a social lie. (Hartman, 1999, p. 252)

The passions, fears, ideas, visions, wisdom, and ignorance surrounding the roles and dynamics of conflict are staggeringly powerful. Some—such as Kaplan, Sun-Tzu, Machiavelli, and Hobbes—call for a Leviathan to deploy a massive military lock-down of the whole world and all dissent. Others embrace dialogue and deep democracy, and point to many successes, but avoid comment on the failure of dialogue to be generalized into an effective approach for all situations. Mindell maintains that

Learning to create a facilitating atmosphere is a highly complex topic requiring as much inner work and reflection on one's own life, as it does academic study of history. Then the facilitator must know the truth about dreaming; that there are invisible spirits in the air which make everyone nervous, though no one may be able to voice exactly what those spirits and tendencies may be. The facilitator must awaken her own sensitivities to notice this "dreaming," and the manner in which it represents itself in the imaginations of all of us, in the ghosts within, and in the group. Her training must in some sense allow her to bring these ghosts forward, and encourage

herself and everyone to play these ghosts. This work is a mixture of seriousness because of the horror and abuses of history, and creative play - because of the social, almost game like element of dreaming. Processes often switch from seriousness to play, from one to the other in microseconds. (Mindell, 2000)

The basis of learning to create a facilitating atmosphere begins with learning to facilitate one's inner atmosphere. The "revolutionary change of heart" Toynbee mentioned is a shift from searching for evil and the source of difficulties exclusively in others. In a post-Newtonian world where the interconnectedness of everything is increasingly evident, the importance of self-reflection is, hence, increasingly apparent.

This path of inner work, described as the inner Jihad in Islam, is a profoundly political process. It is also profoundly difficult.

The purpose of deep democracy is not to replace political democracy. This is not a new form of Marxist revolution. It is a high dream and a vision that is, at times, practical and at times beyond our capabilities. While the work of practicing deep democracy continues to find its way into more conflicts, more communities, and the minds of more and more people; our collective abilities will improve, no doubt at the speed of glaciers. The need for civil, political, and military structures will continue as will the need to support power and to fight against abuses of power.

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