

The Primal Issue

This issue is devoted to Primal Therapy and some of its relatives. In selecting the material for it, I have been more concerned to do justice to the British scene than to do justice to primal therapy as such and in itself. This is the reason why there is nothing here from Janov or his direct followers. Their views are easily available in Janov's many books (see booklist on another page) and in the Journal of Primal Therapy. But there is as yet no Janov-controlled institute of Primal Therapy in this country.

One person on the British scene who is not mentioned in this issue is Frank Lake, or the Clinical Theology Association. The reason for this is that, although they go heavily into some of the same areas as the primal people - birth traumas and the like - they do not call themselves Primal Therapists or educators, and have a different rationale for what they do. (Similar remarks apply to R.D. Laing and some of his associates, and to Ferdinand Leboyer.) It may well be that we shall devote a whole issue to the work of Frank Lake and his associates, which is really unique in the world and very interesting in its own right.

In putting together this material, I have been very impressed by the scope and depth of what has come out of primal therapy, and in particular the theoretical incisiveness and wholeness of Swartley's Primal integration. It seems to me that this weaves together many of the most important strands in the growth movement, to make a convincing yet flexible structure. It now seems clear that humanistic psychotherapy has achieved a maturity and breadth of vision which entitles it to an important place in the sun.

There seems to be a lot of discussion at the moment as to whether the humanistic practitioner is an educator, a counsellor or a therapist. As I have said at greater length elsewhere (1), the psychological process is the same, whatever one chooses to call it. Learning is cognitive and emotional restructuring; the process in counselling and in therapy equally consists in cognitive and emotional restructuring - seeing things differently and feeling differently about them - including one's self. Swartley prefers to call it education; Glyn Seaborn Jones prefers to call it therapy; Jenny James doesn't want to define it too strictly at all. Perhaps it matters to administrators and employers - but they should be aware that they may be trying to make a distinction where there is no difference. One point all of us agree on is that if what we do is therapy, it is not medicine, and we do not think it appropriate to be controlled by medical men.

The feeling I get from reading this issue is that we are regaining more and more of our own lives - reclaiming more and more land from the sea, as it were - and owning more and more of who we are and what we do. This is what I want for myself and for more and more people. Only by owning up to ourselves can we be our selves.

John Rowan

(1) Ordinary ecstasy: Humanistic psychology in action, Routledge 1976.