
PRIMAL INTEGRATION

by
William Swartley

Historical Perspective

Primal Integration is one of a number of primally oriented human maturation techniques which have evolved during the 1970's. The most famous primal technique is Primal Therapy which received a legally contested Service Mark from the United States Patent Office and has been popularized by Arthur Janov, Ph. D. at the rate of a book a year since 1970. Janov's claim to have invented primal techniques single-handedly has been disputed by several authors, including Michael Broder, Charles R. Kelly, W. Kaufman and Milton Klein. David Freundlich, M.D. has clearly traced the roots of primal methods back to the well known work of Charcot (1825-1893), Bernheim, Janet, Breuer, Freud, Otto Rank, Wilhelm Reich, Moreno, Perls, etc. If one chooses to do so, the history of Primal techniques can be traced further back to Mesmer, catharsis in classical Greek tragedy, and shamans at the dawn of history. The term 'primal' was defined by Drever in 1952 as 'first in time'; employed in a special sense by psychoanalysts for a fragmentary recalled experience or scene from early childhood, apparently the first stage in the production of a neurosis. Freud used

the term primal for the first time in a January 17, 1897 letter to Fleiss, and in a 1915 paper described 'primal repression' as the "first phase of repression". In his later writing, Freud distinguishes between primary process (Primärvorgang) and secondary process. Ernest Jones, Freud's major biographer, believed Freud's distinction between primary and secondary process "was perhaps his most fundamental contribution to psychology". Otto Rank used the term primal in several dozen ways in his 'primal classic', **the Trauma of Birth**, which led to his break with Freud.

What's New about Primal Techniques?

There are three new things about primal techniques. First, the most common denominator is a deeper regression into infancy than most human maturation facilitators have been able to allow (feel comfortable with inside themselves) until the 1970's. Thus, the second 'new' thing about primal is actually a new tolerance in our society. The social climate of the 1970's will tolerate the behaviour and acting-out which are constituents of the primal process. We are not doing anything fundamentally different from what

Breuer and Freud started to do during the 1880's. They apparently decided that 19th century society was not ready for the acting-out of intense transference and counter-transference which they provoked during primal regression. Freud very consciously and probably wisely retreated to work with "secondary process" via dream analysis, free association and intellectual analysis of transference. By contrast, when we accidentally left a window open and the Toronto police walked into a group of twenty adults in various stages of regression and undress, all they wanted to know was, "Is everyone here of his own free will?"

Primal Integration

The third 'new' thing about primal techniques is the adaptation I have developed for use with average, maturing adults, called Primal Integration. Primal Integration utilizes regressive techniques with average adults within an educational rather than a therapeutic framework. That is, Primal Integration rejects the authoritarian medical model of treatment, and is an education rather than a therapy.

Fundamental to the effectiveness of Primal Integration has been the evolution of a "primal community", a loose grouping of people who relate to each other in a primal fashion, that is, transfer and acknowledge each other's transferences of primal figures, eg. good and bad father and mother. Most of the change in both inner psychodynamics and social behaviour during Primal Integration happens as a consequence of interaction between the members of our primal

community **outside** the formal structure of the Center's groups and individual sessions.

Historically, this third 'new' ingredient, Primal Integration, is a contribution of the Encounter Group Movement which began on the East and West coasts of the United States during 1962, grandfathered by Maslow and Perls. Thus, Primal Integration may be viewed historically as a child of the union of regressive psychotherapy and the Encounter Movement.

The basic method of Primal Integration is to sate. The word sate, which is now rarely used in English, comes from the Latin word **satis** which means enough. It is related to the Sanskrit word **Sat** and the Zen Buddhist term **Satori**. Synonyms of to sate are to satiate, to satisfy to gratify, to please, to delight, and to indulge. Primal Integration is an implementation of Maslow's theory of the five-level hierarchy of human needs. In simplest terms, Maslow's theory indicates that the most efficient way to achieve the highest (Self-actualizing) level of human functioning is to sate the four "lower needs". This is generally easier in an affluent society. Freud gave his patients permission to satiate their need to **say** anything that came into their heads without fear of judgment. Reich attempted to free his patient's body to **act** spontaneously. Moreno's Psychodrama introduced a structured freedom to **interact** with other patients. The Encounter Movement gave group members freedom to **touch** each other. Primal integration grants the freedom to do

everything you want to **do** with two exceptions:

- a) You may not injure anyone.
- b) You may not break the law.

The essence of primal methods is a safe place (environment) within which to regress. Our primal community is a place where average adults may safely "blow-out". (Average adult is defined as "Free from mental disorder; not insane or neurotic"; Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, 5th Ed. See my article on "Growth Centers" for details). Safety while using primal techniques has two major components: (1) physical safety and (2) psychological safety. For physical safety, our group rooms are a sea of foam rubber. The essence of psychological safety is that our primal facilitators and participants grant permission to regress to **wherever** the participants determine they must go and provide emotional support while they do it.

Role of the Primal Facilitator in Primal Integration

The role of human maturation facilitator is **minimized** in most primal techniques. For instance, our brochure states: "Our staff is trained to do as **little** as possible. Whenever a staff member succeeds in doing something for you, he/she **permanently** robs you of the opportunity to do the same thing for yourself. The three major roles of our staff are:

1. To **help** protect you from physical harm;
2. To **teach** the simple "rules" of the Primal integration process;

3. To **help** provide the optimum environment for you to work on yourself and then to **stay out of your way**".

A second major difference between the role of the primal facilitator and most other techniques is that we **encourage** an **exaggerated** form of transference by participants onto our facilitators and/or other participants. For instance, rather than analyze transference as is done in Psychoanalysis, we encourage participants to intensify their transference until it takes its grossest form. Once it is clear what a person really wants to **do**, it is relatively easy to work through the transference by hitting a parent substitute with a rubber bat, acting-out incest, nursing at a breast, etc.

A third major difference in the role of the primal facilitator is that transference is often fluid and can be switched from one facilitator to another for a variety of reasons, including availability of staff, physical and/or emotional fatigue of a facilitator, a sudden switch by a participant from acting-out feelings toward mother to feelings toward father.

A fourth major difference between the role of a primal facilitator and most other human maturation techniques is that we encourage participants to make any psychosomatic or neurotic symptoms which may appear get **worse**. This is done by various means including: auto-suggestion, massage of various types ("Esalen massage", Polarity Therapy, massage of Reichian body armour and Rolfing), and a non-authoritarian form of hypnosis. We have found massage an

almost necessary adjunct to Primal Integration. We also use hypnosis to recall intense trauma (such as incest) **without** an emotional component which is then easier to experience during the Primal process.

First Major Phase of Primal Integration - Regression

There are two major phases of Primal Integration: (1) Regression and (2) Progression. The first, regressive phase, involves making psychological contact with traumatic experiences. Such experiences vary from a single incestual contact to chronic maternal deprivation. One characteristic of all traumas is that they are "unfinished", and thus are obviously influencing the present. Primal regression is consistent with Perls' injunction to focus in the present and his conception of "unfinished business". The most impressive psychotherapy I have ever witnessed was done by Fritz Perls in 1963. He led a woman through a fantasy, dug up her father's grave, finally said goodbye to him, and put him back in the ground. Now, I would label what Perls did as a primal. Perls was influenced by three major streams of thought: (1) his therapy with Wilhelm Reich which led to his interest in body language, (2) The Gestalt school of learning theory which focused on insight learning rather than learning through association of trial and error, and (3) Hindu/Buddhist philosophy. A "primal" may be compared to filling in the last pieces of a jig-saw puzzle. The human mind appears to need closure to finish a major experience.

Primal growth techniques may be described as the 'heaviest' member of the human potential family. Our brochure states, "Primal Integration is **not** appropriate for a first encounter experience. The biggest danger is that you may become frightened by the intensity and irrationality of primal experience". We do **not** believe that Primal Integration is good for everyone. In fact, we follow a Zen Buddhist Tradition and **discourage** everyone from beginning the primal process. We believe that if other growth techniques are sufficient, people should use them instead of starting the lengthy (about two year), usually very painful primal process.

Thus, most of the average adults whom we accept for Primal Integration have reached the limits of less intense methods without completing as much "unfinished business" as they choose to try to complete. For instance, more professional psychoanalysts have come to our Center than any other single professional group. They may have succeeded in talking out all the traumatic experiences which occurred **after they learned to talk**. Success with other psychotherapies or human maturation techniques is one of the optimum conditions in which to enter Primal Integration. However, the psychoanalysts come because they feel negative influences in their lives which stem from experiences **before they learned to talk** and use secondary (rational) process.

Second Major Phase of Primal Integration - Progression

The first major phase of Primal Integration is regressive, oriented toward past traumas and is, therefore, usually pervaded by "Primal Pain" (Janov's term). On the other hand, the second major phase of Primal Integration is progressive, oriented toward the future, and is, therefore, usually pervaded by an extraordinary degree of 'primal joy' (similar to members of encounter groups. As a rule of thumb, the greater the Primal Pain which is experienced during Primal Integration, the greater the subsequent primal joy.

The goal of Primal Integration is change, both internal and external. Without subsequent change, the psychological pain usually involved during Primal Integration would be senseless. In simplest terms, the goal of Primal Integration is a massive re-construction of personality. The changes which occur during Primal Integration are so rapid and so major we **warn** new group members that, if the process works for them, they will change one or more of the following: their close friends, their job, their mate, their vocation, their lifestyle, their income (usually lowers), their sexual orientation, their nationality.

During the second phase of the primal process, participants give themselves a 'second childhood' of their choice. Persons going through the second, reconstructive phase, usually pick one or more members of our primal community to be their new mother and/or father. They frequently arrange to give themselves a new birth (rebirth)

between the legs of their new mother and may suck from her breast or be fed from a bottle for hours. Likewise, they frequently adopt other members of our primal community to be new siblings with whom they play childhood games for days. They give themselves what has been termed "a second chance family".

Four Types of Primal Abreaction

The most common type of "unfinished business" involves emotional discharge. Most primal techniques are feeling-based and cathartic in character. Freud wrote before 1900 that "the hysterical attack is perhaps to be regarded as an attempt to complete the reaction to the trauma" and was clear that such completion required an "emotional discharge". A "primal" completes an experience, usually in infancy.

Although the most common type of "primal" is an emotional catharsis, this may be only a historical accident. Emotional primals are easiest to facilitate, especially for emotionally-based facilitators like many of the persons now using primal techniques. However, it is clear that there are at least four types of primal experience: (1) Emotional (or feeling) Primals (which Janov terms "second line primals") which primarily involve the **closure** of an emotional experience, (2) Sensation Primals which primarily involve the closure of a bodily sensation (which Janov terms "first line primals" or in Jungian terms may be called Sensation Function primals), (3) Logical (rational or thinking) Primals (which Janov terms "third

line primals") which primarily involve the **change** of a logical conclusion about the nature of the world, (4) Intuitive Primals which involve primarily a **change** in a symbolic creation such as symbolizing a mother as a witch or a father as a dragon.

Dynamic Relationship Between Primal Traumas

Primal Integration is complicated by the fact that traumatic experiences are **not** recalled chronologically. Traumatic experiences are not stored like geological strata which reveal the history of the earth. Instead, they are stored in a much more psycho-dynamic fashion. There are 'families' of associated traumas. For instance, more than one 'family' of traumas may stem from **different** experiences during birth. Each group of traumas is stored in the unconscious with the least 'heavy' (traumatic) experience on top. One model is what happens when you pour different kinds of oil into a jar. After some time, the various oils arrange themselves one on top of another, with the heaviest oil on the bottom. If you add another oil (trauma) to the jar, it will take its place relative to the weights of **all the other oils**. In general, the primal process involves working on one 'family' of traumas at a time, beginning with the upper most (least traumatic) event.

How far must you Regress?

The majority of people who use primal techniques regress at least to their birth, but not all do. Otto Rank first conceptualized ejection from the womb prototype trauma.

Freud acknowledged the strong **physiological** reactions to birth as the prototype of future anxiety. But until the advent of primal techniques, there was no means to verify whether a person could remember her/his birth. It is now quite clear that not only can some people recall their birth, but they can do so in minute detail. For instance, if a person was stuck on a shoulder during birth, as he regresses into the experience, I can see which shoulder it was. In one case, we later learned from hospital records that the shoulder had been broken, which the individual did not even know. This may seem amazing, until you consider that two-thirds of the nerves entering the brain come from sense receptors inside the body, most of which are functioning fully long before birth. A foetus is quite capable of remembering what enters its brain before birth. Many people, who apparently had an uneventful birth, have been in the primal process for several years, completing one traumatic experience after another, without ever recalling their birth. Thus, birth does not have to be as traumatic as Rank believed and as the film produced by the French obstetrician, Frederic Leboyer, has recently demonstrated. However, in our society, birth is often traumatic and, therefore, most people deeply in the primal process reach the residual effect of their birth on their present behavior. In fact, it is not uncommon for a birth trauma to be **the** prevailing trauma in a person's life.

Likewise, it is not uncommon for people to regress to experiences in their mothers' womb. At least one

person has reported what the foetus sees from the womb (an interweaving of red and black). Only one person has reported on his unusual conception (he discovered his legal father was not his biological father). A number of persons have reported recalling experiences from previous incarnations, which unfortunately remain unverified.

Final Goal of Primal Integration

The completion of Primal Integration remains so rare that the English language does not even have a name for it. In Sanskrit (which is the only language in which I can think about it) it is called **Samadhi** which comes from two Indo-Aryan roots; **sam**=together and **adha**=to direct, here implying unity. Because the basic method of Primal Integration is to sate, it is the opposite of to repress or inhibit. Thus, the end of the satiation process might be called spontaneous expression, getting the bodymind together, or achieving an **unaltered** state of bodymind.

I believe that except for a few 'enlightened' souls, the vast majority of people spend most of their lives in an altered state of consciousness. The brutal procedures at birth in most hospitals appear designed to psychologically cripple most

children for life. If the hospital procedures do not cripple a child, the type of social interaction taught by authoritarian parents make it impossible for most of their children to ever complete the human maturation process. As a result, most adults in our society continue to project their parents in various degrees on everyone they ever meet. The most obvious consequence of success with Primal Integration is a steady reduction of projection on other people. Those who have gone furthest in the process view themselves, other people, and objects as ever more unique.

Our handbook for participants concludes:

"WARNING: When you leave, you will have to face the unreal world outside our door. You will have to learn how to deal with an unreal world until you can determine how to change it to make it more real. The best place we know to begin is to remain real so other people can see that it is possible to remain real in an unreal world. The next best thing to do is help create a generation of real children by working for new birth procedures and by raising children to be themselves. If we can produce enough real children, they may be able to get together and change the rest of the world".

Wm. Swartley, Ph. D., was Founder-Center for the Whole Person, New York, Philadelphia, London, Toronto. He was also Founder of the International Primal Association.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

BOOKS

1. James Derver, **Dictionary of Psychology**, Baltimore: Penguin Books, 1952
2. Sigmund Freud, **Collected Papers**, New York: Basic Books 1959
3. Arthur Janov, **The Primal Scream**, New York: Doubleday, 1970
4. ditto **The Anatomy of Mental Illness**, New York: G.P. Putnam Sons, 1971
5. ditto **The Primal Revolution**, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1972
6. ditto **The Feeling Child**, New York: Simon and Schuster, 1973
7. ditto **Primal Man**, in Press
8. Ernest Jones, **Life and Work of Sigmund Freud**, New York: Basic Books, 1953
9. Otto Rank, **The Trauma of Birth**, New York: Harper Torchbooks
10. Frederic Leboyer, **Birth Without Violence**, New York: Knopf, 1975
Film by the same title available from New Yorker Films, 43 West 61st. St., New York, N.Y.

OTHER PUBLICATION

1. Broder, Michael S., **An Eclectic Approach to Primal Therapy**, 1974. Thesis: Goddard College. Available from the author at 517 South 22nd St., Philadelphia, PA 19146
2. Brown, Malcolm, **The New Body Psychotherapies**. Available from the author at 3125 Claremont Ave., Berkeley, CA 94705
3. Freundlich, David, "Janov's Primal Theory of Neurosis and Therapy". **Current Psychiatric Therapies**, Ed. by J.H. Masserman, New York: Grune and Stratton, 1975
4. Freundlich, David, **An Historical Perspective of Primal Therapy**. Available from the author at 304 West 105th St., New York, 10025
5. Freundlich, David, A list of numerous other publications on primal techniques available from the author at 304 West 105th St., New York, NY 10025
6. Kaufman, W. "An Anatomy of the Primal Revolution", **Journal of Humanistic Psychology**, Vol. 14, No.4 (Fall 1974) pp 49-62
7. Kelley, Charles R., "Part-Primal and Genital Character: A Critique of Janov and Reich", **Journal of Humanistic Psychology**, Vol.12, No.2, (Fall 1972), pp 61-73
8. Klein, Milton I., **A Critical Evaluation of Freudian and Janovian Theory and Therapy**. Available from the author at 145 East 27th St., New York, NY 10016
9. Swartley, Wm., "Growth Centers", **The 1973 Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators**, Iowa City: University Associates, 1973

WORD & ACTION (DORSET)

- * *In its fifteenth year as a theatre (and writing) service*
- * *Independent of revenue grants/sponsorship*
- * *Run on co-operative principles (equal responsibility/Low Wages)*
- * *700 participating events annually in Britain and 13 European countries*
- * *Vegeterian/non-smoking*

REQUIRES WOMEN/MEN IMMEDIATELY FOR ITS TWO-COMMUNITY AND OVERSEAS - COMPANIES

- * Any background considered
- * Interest in transformative values/openness to new ideas
- * Write: 43 Avenue Road, Wimborne, Dorset BH21 1BS; phone: 0202-883197; for further details.