

**RADICAL
PSYCHIATRY:
THE SECOND
DECADE**

**EDITED BY BETH ROY AND
CLAUDE STEINER
THIRD EDITION**

To the Reader:

Copies of this book may be obtained by sending \$12 plus \$3 postage to:

Beth Roy
270 Prospect Ave.
San Francisco, CA 94110

The Reader is also encouraged to copy this book or any parts thereof, willy-nilly.

PREFACE

to the Second Edition, 1994

Since we first circulated this manuscript six years ago, much has changed. In mid-1991, the Bay Area Radical Psychiatry Collective disbanded. Having worked together for twenty years, we felt the time had come to let go, to follow the work into new realms and forms. Most of us continue to practice therapy, in private practice or in agency settings. But it seemed the political and intellectual work of the collective had become strained. The world around us had changed: we were in the Reagan-Bush years which meant hard times. The wall was down and progressive ideology in a state of uncertainty. Genetic approaches to psychology and to nearly everything-under-the-sun dominated the field of therapy, giving medication-prescribing psychiatrists renewed professional credibility and challenging us to deeper levels of socially-grounded theory-making.

Both personal life and political work were constrained by the new realities. Energy for collective work was low, and that seemed to us a measure of our intensity over twenty-some years, of the completion of the one creative phase of theory-building, and of the new demands of the times. For instance, many of us needed to earn a living by working

inside agencies, which meant we had to encompass in our ideas what we were learning in the institutions in which we worked; meanwhile, it continued to be important to enter into new controversies in the world of therapy as biologic approaches returned to an old ascendancy in new forms. Rather than hang on to tradition, we preferred to let go and see where the work itself took us.

No sooner had we made that decision than our comrade Mark Weston became ill. Mark died early in 1992. Deaths of near ones seem to punctuate the history of Radical Psychiatry (as we know they do so many collective endeavors). As we dedicated the first edition of this manuscript to another fallen colleague, so we dedicate this one to the memory of Mark.

I decided to reprint this collection of essays because I was asked for copies repeatedly by students, participants in our work, and interested on-lookers. It is heartening to know that the work we began continues to be helpful, and to grow as it is used and transformed in many ways by many people in many walks of life.

Beth Roy

San Francisco, CA

July 1994

PREFACE

to the First Edition, 1988

We are happy to present to our friends this (not quite complete) manuscript of our forthcoming book, *Radical Psychiatry: The Second Decade*.

Most of us are (or have been) members of the Bay Area Radical Psychiatry Collective, a group of practitioners who work out of a common theory of psychology. We set out some considerable time ago to write a collective work, forsaking the simpler, but less interesting, method of singular authorship that is more common. The work speaks in a variety of voices, which the editors have tried to maintain. It has also been a long time coming, as we thrashed through the difficulties of writing in the midst of busy lives, helped and supported each other, collaborated, critiqued and re-drafted again and again.

Nearing the end of this project brings to mind its very beginning. At the center of that memorable event was a good friend and colleague who did not live to see its completion. In 1983 we all went away to the country for a weekend, to brainstorm the book of our dreams and to launch its writing. The first session was a chaos of

imagination; everyone had ardent ideas and worries and plans and on and on. Eric Moore leaped to the front of the room, butcher paper and many-colored felt-tip pens in hand, and he organized us. To remember the start of this book is to remember Eric, full of humor, brimming with opinions, a man who could rattle our cages and hook our hearts at one and the same moment; Eric dancing his way through a difficult discussion, contentiously, lovingly, loyally; Eric with his powerful brain and nurturing hands, always challenging an idea and rubbing someone's tense and tired shoulder.

Shortly afterwards, Eric was diagnosed with AIDS. He died just one year later. To Eric, whom we lost in the '80s to the plague of the '80s, we dedicate this book.

The manuscript is still a work-in-progress, with a good deal of changing, cutting and editing still to come. We welcome input from you. If you have comments, suggestions, ideas for topics not covered, or just a few words of encouragement, please drop them in the mail to Beth Roy, 270 Prospect Ave., San Francisco, CA 94110.¹

Bay Area Radical Psychiatry Collective
San Francisco, August, 1988

¹ 1997: 270 Prospect Street, San Francisco, CA 94110.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Introduction

Part I: Theory

Chapter One: **Power**

Claude Steiner

Chapter Two: **Loss of Power — Alienation**

Beth Roy

Chapter Three: **Recovery of Power — Ways of Thinking**

Beth Roy, Shelby Morgan

Part II: Working Concepts

Chapter Four: **Cooperation**

Claude Steiner, Beth Roy

Chapter Five: **The Pig Parent**

Claude Steiner

Chapter Six: **Competition**

JoAnn Costello, Beth Roy

Chapter Seven: **The Rescue Triangle**

Sandy Spiker, Beth Roy

Chapter Eight: **Emotional Literacy**

Claude Steiner

Part III: Practice of Therapy

Chapter Nine: **Groups**.....
Beth Roy

Chapter Ten: **Mediation**.....
Becky Jenkins, Claude Steiner

Chapter Eleven: **Bodywork**.....
Sandy Spiker, Beth Roy

Chapter Twelve: **Training**
Marian Oliker, Mark Weston

Chapter Thirteen: **Collective**
Beth Roy

Chapter Fourteen: **Critique of Transference**
Beth Roy

Part IV: Applications

Chapter Fifteen: **Friendship**.....
Becky Jenkins

Chapter Sixteen: **Women Planning Our Own Futures**.....
JoAnn Costello

Chapter Seventeen: **Cooperative Childrearing**
Beth Roy

Chapter Eighteen: **Love and Rescue in Lesbian Relationships**
Diana Rabenold

Chapter Nineteen: **Disability**.....
Eleanor Smith
Chapter Twenty: **Combating Racism**.....
Beth Roy
Chapter Twenty-One: **Public Agencies, Minority Clients**
Shelby Morgan

Appendix

Appendix A: **The Pig Lexicon**.....
Diana Rabenold
Appendix B: **Guidelines for Radical Psychiatry Group
Members**.....
Appendix C: **Reading List**.....

INTRODUCTION

Beth Roy

Twenty years have passed since Radical Psychiatry began amid the hub-bub and excitement of the San Francisco Bay Area in the '60s. Root assumptions about life in America were being challenged from many directions. Black people's movements for civil rights had jogged people from the fearful apathy of the '50s. Vietnam gave questions of activism life-and-death urgency for a wide population of young people, and launched a "new left." Free speech movements spread like a sequence of joyful chain-explosions from Berkeley eastward. Betty Friedan's *The Feminine Mystique* had hit the paperback stands in the early '60s, and women's consciousness-raising groups were spreading deep in the subsoil of the land. Flower children declared an epoch of peace and love, and flooded toward the Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco and Telegraph Avenue across the Bay in Berkeley to establish a "space" in their own image, shocking the mainstream American towns and families from which they had escaped.

It was a melding of these various streams of rebellion that gave birth to Radical Psychiatry, stimulated especially by very practical and immediate needs among the flower children. Practicality was what they tried to leave behind. They were adventurers, eyes focused on the brave new world of the future they dared to dream. They cut loose the old ways, donned new clothes and new sexual mores. Often, though, they found themselves in a wholly new city, without money or means, alone in the crowd, bewildered and afraid. They challenged a lifestyle, but with it some shed their touchstones of self and well-being, too. Disoriented young people, in pain, lonely, unhoused, under-fed, were frequent wanderers among the spirited population on the streets.

A fine free medical clinic was organized in Berkeley, and a group of people decided to offer psychological services through its auspices as well. To meet the needs of a community for whom every sacred cow was up for re-examination, these therapists and therapy-clients realized they must similarly reinvent the wheel of psychology. What was mental health, after all, in a world where family, sexuality, work ethics, indeed the very goals of life, were up for discussion?

That early work happened in an atmosphere of intense and exciting controversy and synthesis. Hogie Wyckoff, a committed feminist, was newly discovering Marxism in a course at the University. She proposed that the new thinking start with the concept of alienation rather than the old model of illness and health. Becky Jenkins and Bob Schwebel, both children of left families, contributed a fundamentally political approach. Claude Steiner had studied with Eric Berne, a challenger of old modes of psychotherapy and a leading light of the Growth Movement. Claude taught the concrete skills he had learned as a Transactional Analyst, including a strong inclination toward group work and a facility for understanding transactions, the interpersonal, "here-and-now" realm of psychology as opposed to the internal and historical.

WHY WE WROTE THIS BOOK

Several books were published in the early days, drawing on materials published in *Issues in Radical Therapy (IRT)*, a quarterly paper edited by Claude, Hogie, Joy Marcus, and Bob (see Reading List, Appendix C). It was an intensely creative and productive period. New theory was being framed "on the hoof," in the workshops of drop-in "rap groups" and free problem-solving groups. To write it up was part of the creative process.

Since then, although much has happened, little has been written in book form. The second decade has been a more introspective one, in which we consolidated the work, became skillful practitioners, learned how to train others, grappled with some hard problems of power inequalities and of isolation. Now after ten years, we feel the time for

reflection has come. Nothing tests theory more accurately than practice. Some of our ideas from the early '70s have fallen by the by; others have held up, changed, grown. One of our agendas in writing this book is to see which those are and where they are heading now.

A second agenda was suggested by a summertime teaching institute we held in 1986. It was called "Still Radical After All These Years." We were boasting, true, but also tickling a sensitive spot we thought needed to be touched. The Institute was fully attended, and T-shirts bearing the title sold out. The phenomenon we were spoofing was real, and it turned out that many people were not laughing.

From the Institute we learned in some sharpened way that we were, indeed, "still radical," and our role as radicals in the larger community of progressives and of therapists took on a renewed importance. We have always walked a thin line between a therapy-oriented community and the left. People steeped in psychological traditions are often antagonistic to our politically progressive and theoretically materialist inclinations. On the other hand, many leftists legitimately criticize psychological work for its failure to take a stand against abuses of power, and they tar us with the same brush. Paradoxically, often those Marxists who are concerned with understanding the psychological dimension turn to an amalgam of Marx and Freud, passing us over because we are "too simple." An approach that derives from the notion of alienation may be all good and well, but they need deeper, more analytical work to plumb the intricacies of their own psyches.

In the '80s, the tendency toward a psychodynamic, Freudian approach has strongly resurfaced. Progressive schools of psychology teach it in what they see as a socially-responsible way. Growth Movement innovators, bioenergeticists, Gestalt practitioners, bodyworkers, behaviorists, reclaim it as a "deeper" way to work. Neo-Freudians, for example psychoanalytic feminists influenced by Nancy Chodorow and Dorothy Dinnerstein, or the followers of Hans Kohut, seek to redeem Freud from discredit, going "beyond" the critiques of the Growth Movement period.

We believe that this movement back toward Freud is part of some more *wide-ranging* political and social developments in America. Our task is not to condemn it, but to understand the real problems out of which it grows, and to speak to those problems in a way consistent with our principles. That is the second aim of this book.

For all our printed silence, over the years our practices have grown and prospered. Some of you reading this book are old friends — people who worked on yourselves in problem-solving groups, readers of *IRT*, or participants over the years in Radical Psychiatry Summer Institutes. Others of you had less direct contact with Radical Psychiatry. The Community Union is a Bay Area-wide organization begun by group members and trainees to provide a variety of community services, which quickly expanded to include many who had no first-hand contact with us. Some readers may have encountered us at the Midwest Radical Therapy Conference, organized for many years by Melissa Farley and the Hera Collective in Iowa City.

Others of you may be new to the ideas we present here. In writing this book, we hope to tell you about our past, and present to you the current state of our theory and practice. But we hope to do more. Radical Psychiatry walks a fine line between proselytizing and exploration. By definition, we represent a minority view, a voice critical of mainstream psychological approaches. To be in opposition is to pursue a polemic and advocate a position. For this reason, we have too often found ourselves in the position of promoting a "line." What is true is that we have created new theory of a challenging political nature, and so it is unlikely to be happily accepted in established circles. We have needed to address new circles, and to do so we often have felt the need to speak in a loud voice.

Unfortunately, to promote a point of view is often to become its prisoner. We cannot afford to let our theory grow stagnant. Above everything else, we are practitioners. Our first commitment is to helping people better their lives. As the world changes, so do the needs and problems of those who seek our help. If we be stuck in old ways of thinking, we cannot respond well to new questions, new goals. Moreover, a static politic is by its nature flawed. Any theory which cannot accommodate the changes in people's lived experience deserves to die.

And so we write this book like Janus, one face backward to assess and report our work so far, the other forward to the new dilemmas and controversies that confront us today. We hope to stimulate debate, and in the process to receive the gift of dialogue.

HOW WE WROTE THIS BOOK

Writing this book posed problems. Some among us were in the habit of writing. Claude had written many articles and books over the years, and as a consequence his name is known as an originator of Radical Psychiatry. While his contribution was substantial, nonetheless the ideas he presented had been the product of collective experience and thinking. However carefully he gave others credit, his name on the spine of the book nonetheless mystified the collective nature of the work.

We decided that this book would be collectively written — a prospect which solved that problem but created new ones. Most people in the Bay Area Radical Psychiatry Collective are fully occupied with their work. We lead problem-solving groups (some of us as many as three a week), do many Mediations, see people in crisis individually, teach, organize Institutes and workshops and, in many cases, because we charge the lowest possible fees, we also work at second jobs to supplement our incomes. The material basis of writing is time — time to reflect, time to learn the craft, time to write, time to erase and time to write again. Long-time practitioners like Becky Jenkins, Beth Roy and JoAnn Costello had contributed crucially to the theory and practice. Becky's vision and charisma had been decisive in attracting new students and building community. Yet two of us (Beth and Claude) were (or had been) professional writers; we knew the craft and could write more quickly than others. Despite our good intentions, we found we could not idealistically pass over the inequalities of skill and time. We spent two years sharing out the work, helping people to master fears, jointly problem-solving about how to find time, how to organize both lives and materials. We talked extensively about the content of the work, and people took on different tasks. Much, much work was accomplished through this hard process; without it, there would be no book.

Nonetheless, the authorship of this book is lopsided. But whoever wrote the words on paper, there is nothing in this book that is not the result of collective endeavor. Everything was forged in the exciting, often exasperating, time-consuming and productive kiln of group discussion and shared experience.

HISTORY OF THE SECOND DECADE

The last decade, as I've said, has been a time of doing. In the Bay Area, there are currently eleven problem-solving groups meeting weekly. It is these groups (see Chapter 9) that form the backbone of our work. In them we have learned most of what we know, tried out ideas, changed them and tried again. They are our laboratory and their participants are our teachers.

While the groups have continued in a steady line, other aspects of our collective lives have changed. In the early years, the Radical Psychiatry community was divided in a split between those who felt that therapy could not be done in a class-divided society, that the only true therapeutic action was social change; and those who contended that therapy need not wait upon social change but was, in fact, a part of that process. In the mid-'70s, some of those divisions were healed when Becky Jenkins and Bob Schwebel rebuilt a collective first with Joy Marcus, and then with Hogie Wyckoff and Claude Steiner. That collective is BARP: the Bay Area Radical Psychiatry Collective. Over the years, some people have gone on to other work and other places,² and new people have come.³

² Joy Marcus and Hogie Wyckoff to other parts of the Bay Area, Shelby Morgan to Baltimore, Bob Schwebel to Tucson, Michael Singer to Los Angeles, Diana Rabenold to Santa Cruz.

Starting in 1976 we held an annual Summer Institute in the Bay Area. People came from wide and far. We presented basic theory, and we demonstrated the practice in fish-bowl groups and Mediations. The Institute quickly became a forum for community gathering and discussion.

Over the years we have trained numbers of people. Our experiments with ways of training are detailed in Chapter 12. Among our trainees have been several from faraway places who have taken the work home with them and trained others. Eleanor Smith from Atlanta, Anna Guenttler from Stockholm, Pierrette Simard from Quebec; each came to the Bay Area to work with us for one to two years. Each of them subsequently brought a group of their colleagues and trainees with them to an Intensive training program in San Francisco. These Intensives (one in 1985, the other in 1987) were two weeks long. About a dozen people met daily, observed groups, raised questions and learned large lessons in Radical Psychiatry.

By the early '80s, Radical Psychiatry was well represented to our larger community by the Institutes, *IRT* and training. As we organized and led these three institutions, we wielded a certain amount of power: to decide who got published, who got trained, who presented at Institutes and about what subjects. People began to be angry at us, and critical. We hoarded training, they complained; it was impossible to get "in." Minorities were not sufficiently honored at Institutes. *IRT* excluded important political positions; and so on.

Our theory and experience told us that this criticism was important, that there was something in it for us to learn. We ourselves were getting tired. We were working hard, without the normal sorts of recognition available to less controversial philosophies: money, academic honors, publication in prestigious journals. In our own world, while many people appreciated us and let us know, many others did not. Burn-out peeked threateningly over the horizon. What were we doing wrong?

What we concluded was that our institutional form had outstripped its appropriateness and usefulness. We were involved in "political Rescue" (see Chapter 7). So we de-institutionalized. We gave *IRT* away, to a collective in the mid-West who had strong ideas on how it should be run. We gave them our permits, our name, our subscription lists, and we loaned them money to get started. They published until 1987, when the journal moved on to Denver and a new group of people.

We stopped organizing the Summer Institute. A group of local people took it over, experimented with new forms, concentrated on the community gathering part of its function, and ran it for several years. When they invited us to speak, we did. But we respectfully followed their creative lead.

Around 1984 we disbanded the Bay Area Radical Psychiatry Collective, and re-formed as a Group of Old Friends (GOOF), for that is what we were. The group served a viable purpose for us all, a place for us to consult about our work as Radical Psychiatrists, and to problem-solve for ourselves. It was clear we had no desire to give it up.

We continued to train people on an apprenticeship model, because the work of training was an important part of keeping our own work alive. Nothing teaches new lessons better than teaching others. The questions and help and ideas of apprentices are an ever-freshening resource.

Slowly, we began again to do public work, being careful to do what was useful for us. We had requests from Atlanta and Stockholm for intensive training, and so we organized the 1985 Intensive. The next year we felt the time was right for a new Institute and we held one. At some point, around 1987, we re-renamed ourselves BARP. We hope we

³ Sandy Spiker, Barbara Moulton, Mark Weston, Marian Oliker, Melissa Farley, Randy Danagan, Darca Nicholson and Jude LaBarre.

have learned some lessons about respecting our own fatigue and others' criticism. They are important signposts to the need for change.

Meanwhile, new things have been brewing in our extended community, ideas we supported but did not originate or implement. Numbers of groups without formal leadership have been started by ex-group members who wanted ongoing support groups, work support, study groups, job-hunting help and so on. The Community Union is a major accomplishment of Radical Psychiatry-oriented people, which involves many with no other Radical Psychiatry connection.

COMMUNITY

Indeed, as we look back over this past decade, what stands out most vividly is *community*. Community is tricky to define. Shared therapy is hardly a sufficient basis for community. What historically has given rise to community is shared work, proximity (neighborhoods), a religious institution, well-defined common politics (like minority or opposition party members) and so on. Many of these communities are formed around the leadership of a strong figure, often male, usually patriarchal. Radical Psychiatry does have a well-defined, oppositional philosophy. But we have been very careful over the years to define ourselves as a therapeutic resource, not a movement or a cult or an organization. We believe that people who seek our help must have free options to associate with others in our midst as little or as much as they freely choose. Our therapeutic stance is firmly based on the principle of sharing power; the use of contracts states clearly that we work on what people come to work on, not our diagnosis or pre-packaged agenda. Our politics, while open and available, are implicit in the theory, not explicitly promoted. We have no special agenda for activism or political belief.

Many of the common bases of community are thus contradicted by our therapeutic stance. Nonetheless, the Institutes have always surprised us by what they say about our community. People who have been in problem-solving groups, or who have encountered the work in some other way, enthusiastically attend. They are eager to meet others who share skills and a point of view, and they push forward the establishment of forms for continuing mutual involvement. The leaderless groups, numbers of collective households, friendships, and the Community Union are outgrowths of that urge.

This de facto community, which has developed with no overt organizational agenda from us, distinguishes us dramatically from most other forms of therapy. Community is explicitly resisted by some therapies, which discourage involvement of co-therapees with each other. A few promote interconnections, but in a centrally organized, highly controlled way. Somehow, our position of arguing for the “mental health” benefits of community while refusing to provide it ourselves, has given rise to a vital, organic series of interconnections that in fact constitute community.

WHO'S RESPONSIBLE HERE?

While this Radical Psychiatry-inspired community has been a-growin' in the Bay Area, psychological philosophy in the country as a whole has undergone some important shifts. In the '70s, when we first wrote theory, what was most interesting in the therapy-world around us was the growth of Humanist Psychology. Writers like Thomas Szasz and R.D. Laing were challenging the fundamental premises of psychiatry, disputing the very concept of mental illness. Eric Berne, Fritz Perls and others proposed radically different approaches to therapy. The mood of the nation was to challenge both psychiatry as an agency of social control, and psychoanalytic theory.

By the beginning of the '80s, a theme latent in that work began to emerge with startling clarity. The Humanists had, as a whole, been apolitical, however ardent their rebellion against psychiatry and Freud. Without an analysis of power and an alternative vision of cooperation, they promoted a view of individual responsibility that became more and more clearly articulated in the work of Werner Erhardt's est and associated approaches.

The doctrine of individual responsibility proposes that each of us is responsible only to ourselves. If you feel something, that is your business. I did not cause you to feel it. This approach is highly consistent with individualism, the prevailing view of humanity in our culture (see Chapter 6). In its extreme, it holds starving babies in Africa responsible for their plight. They chose their birthplace and their parents. This formulation represents the extreme, and most ludicrous, end of a spectrum; many who hold this view are far more sophisticated and humane. Erhardt himself eventually founded an organization to combat hunger. Nonetheless, the notion of individual responsibility lends itself to such an extreme, because it does not acknowledge real interconnections between people that make the responsibility of one the responsibility of all — not as a theoretical precept but as a matter of fact. If I am sad because you have left me, I am in fact responding to something you did. Presumably, what you did was influenced by things I did. We constructed the present reality together, and we brought along numbers of influences from outside the two of us: our ideas about couples, our past hurts and hopes, the pressures of our jobs, the expectations of our families, and so on. What I do when I am sad may be my responsibility. If I call you up in the middle of the night and try to hound you to change your mind, that is not your responsibility. But my panic about your leaving me may also be due to realities neither of us constructed; perhaps you are leaving me alone with two babies and no way to earn a living. Sexism is profoundly influencing my feelings, then, as is the failure of our society to guarantee well-being to all citizens. You, as part of that society and as an actor in my dilemma, are also responsible.

The political implications of this controversy are profound. To deny shared responsibility is to undercut the possibility of shared action. In our view, people moving together under conditions which allow and encourage cooperation, can make a new reality which was unimaginable without the action. Theory and practice are wedded; each person is not a static and isolated unit.

The '80s have been a decade of increased material pressures. In the late '60s and early '70s, there was a sense of largesse in the culture. People talked of a time of plenitude; the problem was sharing the wealth, not creating it. The notion that there was plenty to go around created the luxury to experiment. One could afford to step off the ladder of success and be a rebel or a flower child, because it seemed reasonably certain that one could survive in any case.

But in the '80s the prevailing perception has been of scarcity. Inflation and unemployment wiped out the sense of promise. Reagan and the religious right intensified a sense of fear. Not only could we not afford to experiment, but we must hold the line — against a surprising onslaught coming from the seats of power. The agenda shifted from constructing a new world to defending minimal rights won in the old one. Young people took their creative energies into the business schools; art, politics and philosophy were luxuries they couldn't afford. It was "every man (and maybe woman) for himself." The philosophy of individual responsibility fit right in. It promoted and rationalized what people felt they had to do: get ahead, beat the other fellow. With the decline of progressive social movements, cynicism grew about the prospects for collective action. "Take responsibility for yourself" seemed the only thing to do.

It is interesting that the fashions in psychology quickly turned from there back toward Freud. While the approaches to Freud in the '80s might be new, fundamentally they still shared with psychoanalysis the underlying political premises which we had combated so passionately in the '70s (see Chapter 14). In particular, they turned attention away from action in the present, toward a reconstruction of the past.

Gradually, the connections between Freud and the doctrine of individual responsibility began to become clear. If your partner has no responsibility in determining your responses, then the whole weight of explanation falls on something that is entirely within your own experience. You must search your own heart and psyche for the source of your distress. The search leads further and further back, until finally you seek tools to unravel the beginnings which lie hidden in your unconscious and the private confines of your particular family. Individual responsibility, springing from some of the same social premises as psychoanalysis, in fact must rely on Freud for the final answers.

It is for this reason that we feel especially strongly the need to maintain our presence in the world of therapy. All of us formulate our ideas today in a de-politicized atmosphere. It is very easy to generalize from our own worst fears in ways that further individualize and disempower us. If the battle in the world is harder, then so is the attribution of failure more profound. “Sink or swim” says the mainstream culture — and if you sink it is of your own weight. Not only is “failure” more common today, but its consequences are more dire. People feel more and more to blame, and they seek more profound explanations, and relief, inside themselves. It is not enough to “grow,” as the Growth Movement suggested in the ‘70s. Today, people feel the need to identify and correct their deeply-seated flaws, and the urgency to do so is deep and emphatic.

But so long as we believe those flaws are within us, we do not join together to change the world. So long as we think they are all the responsibility of others, we do not change ourselves so that we are able to join together effectively. We believe that the history of Radical Psychiatry over the past two decades, and especially the extended community which we have stimulated, and which is the antithesis of individualism, suggest our special usefulness. It is our ongoing work to contribute tools that help people gain power in their personal lives, and in the world.