



THE BENIGN REALITY


by Harvey Jackins

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with respect and appreciation

Harvey Jackins

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THE GOLD BENEATH THE MIRE

Each newborn child expects a pleasant world
Akin to its own nature, trees of life
Arising tall against the entropic stream,
Proving safety, comfort, learning vantage,
And welcome to its dear and eager mind,
While brilliant, loving fellow-minds encourage.

The shock to find instead a patterned scum
Of rigid meanness overlaying all,
To see oppressive structures crush and bruise,
With former victims numbly acting out
Their past mistreatments on the innocents,
Haunts and confuses each a whole life through.

The re-emergent healing processes
Which, through long ages, washed against the scum
At last have broken through to full awareness.
Now thousands rally to each others' aid
To re-discover and to implement
And act to strip away the drossy mask.

Clear patches of the real have been exposed,
Confirming ~~that~~ ~~that~~ ~~the~~ ~~truth~~ were true,
And confidently promising the rest
To be as nurturing and as benign
As all the glimpses we have had 'til now.

The noxious scum still spreads too wide by far.
It threatens still destruction and disaster
With nuclear warheads poised to set life back
A billion years or more, but it hangs on
Only because we honor its false claim
To be the way things are. This is not so!
I now proclaim that deep reality
Is good, benign, supports intelligence
In every way. The scum will wash away.

-Harvey Jackins
May 15, 1981

FOREWORD

It has been a delight to me, in assembling this book, to realize again the tremendous depth and strength of the thinking that has been unleashed in the last few years among the great and growing communities of Co-Counselors.

Although the writing is mine, and I take full responsibility for it, both the language and the ideas were hammered out in active communication with thousands and thousands of wonderful people in the Co-Counseling communities, who, by scores and hundreds, were thinking and practicing avidly on each of the subjects dealt with in this book.

During the time these articles took form (from early 1977 to early 1981), I was demonstrating each advance in counseling theory and practice before hundreds of workshops containing almost every variety of people in the world. I was lecturing and receiving responses from a great spectrum of audiences, answering questions at community meetings, responding to a flood of mail, and editing contributions to twenty-five journals on at least that many subjects. In these years I have listened to and read reports from discussion groups at workshops on, literally, thousands of subjects to which these groups were attempting to apply Re-evaluation Counseling theory.

The ideas in this book are very exciting. I think every article here can be reviewed with profit by experienced Co-Counselors. I myself will be reading and re-reading the book many times.

If this book is your first exposure to Re-evaluation Counseling, you will need and want to have access to the earlier, more fundamental theory and organizational experience. You will find these in eleven books published previously, and in the back and current issues of twenty-five journals which have been and are being published. All of these are available, some

in several languages, from Rational Island Publishers, P.O. Box 2081, Main Office Station, Seattle, Washington, 98111, U.S.A. A catalog is available, also.

I describe these publications briefly below:

The Human Side of Human Beings is a short introduction to the theory. *The Fundamentals of Co-Counseling Manual* is a guide to the practical steps of beginning Co-Counseling. *The Human Situation* contains some of the basic segments of the theory, including "The Postulates of Re-evaluation Counseling." *The Upward Trend* embodies the developments in theory and organization of the early years of the now nearly world-wide Re-evaluation Counseling Communities.

Auxilliary to these are the *Guidebook to the Re-evaluation Communities*, which is a summary of the organizational forms and practices; *Rough Notes From Buck Creek I*, which is the most complete exposition of all the applications of the theory; and *Rough Notes From Calvinwood I*, which is the beginning of the Re-evaluation theory of learning and teaching.

Rough Notes From Liberation I and II is the transcript of the great breakthrough workshops which first enlisted the many oppressed groups in society in general support for each other's re-emergence and liberation.

The titles of the Re-evaluation Counseling journals which follow are nearly self-explanatory. *Present Time* is the general journal which everyone throughout the world of Re-evaluation Counseling reads and communicates through; *The Re-evaluation Counseling Teacher, Leader, and Community Builder* is a journal for leaders. The others are: *Our Asian Inheritance*, for exchange of information on RC in the Asian and Asian-American cultures; *Black Re-emergence*, for people interested in black liberation; *The Caring Parent*, for people interested in parenting; *Clarity*, for people interested in science; *Classroom*, a journal on the theory

and practice of learning and educational change; *Colleague*, for communication among college and university faculty and other interested people; *Complete Elegance*, for communication among physically different people and their allies; *The Elders Speak*, for communication among older people and their allies; *Forever and Ever*, for people interested in exploring the possibility of physical immortality; *Heritage*, for exchange of information on RC in Native American cultures; *Men*, for communication among men and their allies; *Pensamientos*, for exchange of information and ideas of people of Latino/a ancestry; *Proud Allies*, for communication among people interested in Gay liberation; *Recovery and Re-emergence*, for people interested in mental health; *Réémergence*, bulletin des Communautés francophones de Coconseil; *Ruah Hadashah*, for everyone interested in Jewish liberation; *Seeds and Crystals*, for poets and poetry lovers; *Sisters*, for communication among co-counselors who are interested in women's liberation; *Songs On Our Way Out*, original songs with RC content; *Sunrise*, for everyone interested in Arab liberation; *Well-Being*, for exchange of information and ideas about health; *Wide World Changing*, for people interested in social change; *Working For a Living*, for everyone interested in working class issues; and *Young and Powerful*, for young people and everyone interested in young people.

To begin involvement in Re-evaluation Counseling in general requires more than literature. If you are interested in being in touch with presently active Co-Counselors who can "show you how," you may write to me at 719 Second Avenue North, Seattle, Washington, 98109, U.S.A., and I will put you in touch with the nearest group of Co-Counselors.

To you Co-counselors who have done so much in the preparation of this book, my deep thanks and appreciation. I hope you enjoy reading and using *The Benign Reality* as much as I have enjoyed putting it together.

—Harvey Jackins
May 15, 1981

Acknowledgements

Thanks to the Co-Counselors of the Re-evaluation Counseling Communities, to the Area Reference Persons, Teachers, Leaders of all descriptions, to the Regional Reference Persons and to the Liberation Reference Persons, to the organizers and leaders of workshops and the editors of the RC journals; all have had an important part in the emergence of the ideas in this book.

Thanks to all the staff at Personal Counselors, and to the publications workers, editors, and typesetters at Rational Island Publishers for help in the direct work of preparing this book. Thanks to Patsy Kempthorne for her personal assistance.

Thanks to my Co-Counselors, in particular to Katie and Lisa, for their consistent work in helping me think through the many issues these articles have dealt with.

Thanks to my dear friends and descendants, Gordon, Tim, Sarah, and Chris, for their steadfast love and support and encouragement to me to keep reaching for the reality of the Universe.

—Harvey Jackins

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Breaking New Ground

The Totally Benign Reality

To free human minds to be themselves seems to me the most satisfying activity one can do. We now know how to lift the weight off the pinned victim, or in the words of the song to "free the spirit from the cell." So, I challenge or invite each of you to liberate humanity from its only really serious handicap, its vulnerability to irrationality, its susceptibility to the imposition of the distress pattern. It is now possible to free humanity from the existing distress, to stop the systematic imposition of additional distress and to finally achieve such liberation of our awareness as will prevent any distress from being re-imposed except temporarily by accidents.

In the future, any accidental distresses will be removed the next hour by the immediate converging of fellow humans to achieve the discharge necessary for prompt re-emergence. I challenge each of you individually to do this, enjoying and glorying in the parallel activity of the others who will be doing it, using the resource of mutual aid and mutual discussion, but not depending on it, not making it the pre-condition for your own full initiative.

At leaders' meetings at workshop breakfasts I have posed the question: "If a peculiar virus suddenly attacked the world which was fatal only to people in RC, but you happened to be immune, and so, in a period of a day, all other RCers were dead, and you alone escaped to tell the story, would you start RC over again world wide, and if you would, how would you go about it?" Pulled outside their usual ruts to think, almost everyone concludes they would do this, and they come up with

Regional Reference Persons Meeting, June 11, 1980

a great variety of the most brilliant and sensible plans for getting started. I suppose at least half the people said, "I would immediately put a guard on the present stock of RC literature and use it to the fullest." A large majority of people at these meetings proposed good, sensible, brilliant plans.

If they can plan this way now to start the international community over again, why aren't they doing it while we are all still alive?

SAMPLES OF REALITY

We have sampled reality a number of places by the insights that we have gotten and expanded, starting out with the realization that crying didn't hurt people and possibly helped. Step by step, we've gotten a better picture of reality through holes we have poked in the pseudo-reality that has been spread over reality and has hidden reality from us. I speak of the great grey globby gucky blanket of pseudo-reality that obscures the nature of reality. The building block of pseudo-reality is the false pictures that we get when a pattern plays, when a past distress experience gets between us and the present.

This operates much of the time for many people. Chronic patterns continually unreel a distorted picture of events that happened a long time ago. The distress occludes reality. Lack of information binds the distress patterns together. Misinformation adds to them. We are just beginning to understand how thoroughly the oppressive society uses misinformation to oppress people. The oppressive society imposes tremendous amounts of misinformation upon people in order to socialize them to fit its own workings. If working people were not told that they are stupid, that they can't initiate or plan things, that they are lucky to have a job, that they are worthless, and should be grateful for the chance to contribute their surplus labor value to their employers; if they were not made to believe that in large numbers, the economic system could not work. No

intelligent people with confidence in themselves would carry out the routine production labor under today's conditions, so the society has found it necessary to systematically misinform. The schools have been thoroughly enlisted to assist in this distortion. Our educational change people have done a valiant job of revealing the enormous depravity of the educational process which does everything except educate; which conditions, stultifies, discourages and numbs and de-humanizes under the pretext of furnishing information.

Well, this great sheet of gobby, gooey guck which we have accepted as reality has been pierced in a few places. Outside of RC and before RC people have continually questioned it. "It doesn't seem to me that mom and dad should have to fight so much," thinks the little child. "I wonder why people can't get along." "I am willing to work, why can't I have a job?" Questions like this come up repeatedly. In RC, we have poked little holes in this grey nasty crud that crawls over every floor and up every wall and across every ceiling where human beings live and we have gotten little bright glimpses of what's back of it. When we poked tentatively and the stuff yielded we were encouraged to poke a little more.

When we thought about each individual taking more responsibility and it worked well, we poked harder until, finally, closing our eyes and with great daring, we stabbed all the way through and said, "Each person is completely in charge of the whole universe," and sunlight streamed through the gap. It turned out to be true, even though it seemed wildly improbable the time we first said it.

When we tried validation and self-validation and self-appreciation a little and it had positive effects, we tried it a little bit more and finally we tried COMPLETE APPRECIATION OF ONESELF WITHOUT ANY RESERVATIONS, and brilliant and beautiful color showed through the great globby

guck. The reality was there.

It turned out that all people can learn well if they are allowed to remain curious and are helped to feel good about themselves. The grey guck had said, "Praise them if they do what they are supposed to," but we asked, "How about praising them all the time? How about letting them decide what they want to learn?" We tried poke after poke. Finally the biggest poke took place in Palo Alto with the pre-school there when a couple of adults systematically, day after day, tried to listen to the children decide what *they* wanted. Within two years the children had planned and run the school and given directions to the adults and bright beautiful colors streamed through the gaps in the grey blanket that enshrouded us.

I think it is time to go all the way on the question of reality, to conclude that all reality is good.

(Even, in a certain context, the great grey globby blanket is understandable, is good. I'll put it this way: it is good that we have this challenge.)

Our descendants will look back to our time with two kinds of wonder. (They will come and ask us about it, if we solve the immortality question fast enough.) First, they will wonder that we could endure the difficulty of our lives. They will be amazed at our heroism, that we managed to function so well under the tremendous burden of our distress, that we managed to get re-emergence going against this waterfall of restimulated distress that rained upon us all our lives.

The other wonder will be kind of an envious one. They will look back wistfully and think, "Oh, to have been great-grandma, who lived in that period when the sun finally came up, when humanity finally found itself!" They will think of us as the most fortunate of beings in that sense, that we got to be