

# THE PIG PARENT

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Cooperation is both a political vision and a practical structure for working together. Most of us, however, have been carefully trained to operate in a hierarchic world. Not cooperation but power plays are rewarded and, indeed, required in many areas of our lives. Along the way, we become alienated from our own capacity to connect with others.

Radical Psychiatry conceives of alienation as a process affecting the heart as well as the hands. Not only is labor alienated, not only are individuals alienated from each other, but each of us is alienated from our own humanity.

These internal or psychological consequences of alienation are what we call *Internalized Oppression*. What links experience in the world with our hearts and minds is a body of ideas we learn and which then inform our view of ourselves and of the world. In the course of a lifetime, we encounter many ideas. But some of them are more significant than others, and they become incorporated into a value system that has psychological force. They forge a set of rules that enjoin us to behave in certain ways in the world, and they accuse us of certain failings and flaws if we do not obey those rules.

Women in western industrialized societies, for instance, are taught to believe a particular conception of womanliness. Women, in this view, should be healers, emotionally sensitive beings who make peace. Good women ought to know how to maintain relationships, and that way should be to take care of the loved ones, meeting their emotional and physical needs. Notice the “shoulds” and “oughts” in this description. In the grammar of Internalized Oppression, they are the verbs. Notice also the implication for women who are angry and controversial, who wish to build edifices rather than make homes. Lying invisibly right beneath these rules is a list of attributes of women who fail in their duty: they are unwomanly, hard, insensitive, ball-breakers, unfeminine. Boiled down to their crudest denominator, these accusations are more elegant ways of conveying a set of basic attributions: crazy, lazy, stupid, sick, ugly and deserve to die.

It is in the form of these abusive accusations and restrictive injunctions that Internalized Oppression comes to have psychological force. We call these sorts of messages the Pig, and it is in this form that we apply the theory of Internalized Oppression in Radical Psychiatry.

The concept of the Pig has its historical roots in the Parent ego state as defined by Eric Berne. For a fuller understanding of ego states, consult Berne's paper “Ego States in Psychotherapy” (1957), his first presentation of the notion.

Ten years after Berne's introduction of the ego states, as I was trying to make sense out of the tragic aspects of alcoholic behavior, I began to discern that there were two kinds of parental behavior visible in some people: one type, which seemed to direct them to do socially acceptable behavior (“Don't talk with your mouth full,” “Don't drink too much”), and another which seemed to attack, denigrate and defeat people (“You are a slob,” “You'll die a drunk.”) When I looked at these ego states in detail I concluded that these two Parent ego states were different entities.

They were both introjects of a real external human being as perceived, but they were introjected from different people or different parts of people and, perhaps more importantly, they were introjected at different times in the person's life. The abusive Parent ego states seemed to be adopted at a time in which the offspring's perceptions are eidetic<sup>1</sup>, synergic and holistic. As a consequence this Parent had a different quality than the introjects that occur later in life when the

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<sup>1</sup> *eidetic*: of or pertaining to an extraordinarily detailed and vivid recall of visual images (*The American Heritage Dictionary*).

person's perceptions are of a quite different nature. The differences between the perceptions and thought of young children and grownups has been amply explored by psychologists, notably Werner and Piaget.

In any case, in early childhood, parents are perceived differently than they are later. If the parent is, at significant times, controlling, harsh, selfish, or unloving, these qualities will be predominantly perceived by the very young child. This intimate emotional behavior of the parent toward the child will be accepted, learned and adopted and will become an internal influence often heard as a controlling, harsh, selfish or unloving voice in the head.

Later in life the offspring will observe and perceive his parents in a different light. The same father who privately beats, cheats and lies to the child is also a public person who speaks of values such as fatherly love and truthfulness. These values will be accepted, and adopted by the offspring and will also become part of his Parent ego state.

One major difference which I have observed between the two Parents is that one is “civilized,” nurturing, benevolent and imbued with attitudes of love and understanding between human beings. Criticism and censure coming from that ego state is measured and temperate.

The other Parent is not bound by any such temperance or consideration. It seems to be barbaric, inconsiderate, and punitive. Its sanctions for disobedience are severe and it does not stop at causing physical harm as a way of enforcing injunctions. It is as if, in the two Parents within the person, one met two distinct periods of history, two trends of authority, two different modes of interpersonal relationships, one much more “civilized” than the other.

At the time in the late '60s when we were developing these concepts, we observed the forces of “law and order” bashing in the heads of young people who were struggling against the war in Viet Nam. We saw a similarity between the behavior of some policemen and the primitive cruel Parent which we named the “Pig Parent,” a label that stuck over the years. (It is important to note that we also saw peace officers who were benevolent, protective and kind.)

When the name “Pig” was chosen, it was chosen because it was topical, and it personified in one simple word a very important concept that we saw operating in our everyday lives. At the time I was lecturing around the country, and in my presentations I would tentatively and cautiously introduce the Pig Parent, with the assumption that only those who were politically active, anti-war activists from New York or Berkeley would understand and appreciate the label. But I found that not to be the case. Instead, the term and concept of the Pig Parent was acceptable to many across the country and we in Radical Psychiatry became more confident in its use. The Pig Parent, we explained to people, was a part of our personality which was entirely antagonistic to our OKness. Unless we follow restrictive, death-dealing injunctions which it wants to impose on us, it will call us bad, stupid, ugly, crazy, lazy or sick; it may even tell us we deserve to die. If we succumb, it will call us the same names anyway. Eric Berne had noticed, as had Freud and other students of human nature before him, that these crude, cruel, sadistic, destructive messages could literally be heard by people as human voices — “voices in the head,” as Berne dubbed them.

The Pig Parent has been met with mixed reception. In the practical arena of group psychotherapy, this concept has proven to be extremely viable and useful. My experience with a number of different new ideas that have been developed in Radical Psychiatry over the last decade is that some have a strong initial appeal and get considerable use for a while, and then eventually fall away to become historical curiosities to be talked about on occasion. As an example, even the use of ego states and games enjoyed a relatively brief period of intense use and interest and eventually has somewhat fallen off. However, one of the ideas that has remained extremely useful and persists in our practice is the concept of the Pig Parent, which lately has come to be known simply as the Pig.

## **PERSISTENT CONCEPT**

Why is this concept so persistent? I believe it is because it reflects an extremely real and important aspect of human unhappiness. When we are unhappy, we can invariably point to negative words, sentences, images and thoughts about

ourselves which intrude into our consciousness. These negative influences we call the Pig. Consistent with the belief that people are basically OK, we assume a priori that the Pig is external to us, an introject that is capable of being excluded from our lives. There is an apt analogy in Transactional Analysis that the Parent is like a tape recorder. The Pig Parent “tape” is like a cassette recording which feeds us negative misinformation and commands. Staying with the cassette metaphor, the Pig can be turned down, turned off, re-recorded, or ejected. The work of Radical Psychiatry is very frequently concerned with detecting Pig messages, isolating them from the rest of consciousness, disowning them (recognizing their external sources), and struggling against them with the ultimate aim of getting rid of them.

Further, and more importantly, I believe that the concept of the Pig persists because it represents, in a very apt metaphor, the reality of why people suffer emotionally. The sources of “mental illness” have been pursued in many guises: chemical imbalances, genetic disease, childhood trauma, masturbation, sin, repressed screams, karma, and so on. Radical Psychiatry postulates that people's unhappiness is basically externally caused and has its source in external oppressive influences. These influences are taken in, adopted, introjected or internalized, to be sure, but they remain external in origin. They are foreign, alien influences which, like a splinter in the finger, can be removed and banished from the personality.

In short, the Pig concept persists because it works to explain people's unhappiness and because we have developed methods to get rid of it which result in substantial, visible and relatively prompt relief from most forms of emotional distress. It should be pointed out here that the Pig is the street name for the more academically and theoretically correct concept of Internalized Oppression.

In using the Pig concept in our work we have found that we can isolate Pig statements from other nurturing Parental statements, and from Adult critical statements. We further found that by disallowing all Pig Parent behavior in groups, we established an atmosphere of trust and cooperation which was very helpful to people in getting rid of their own Pig. Eventually, over the years, we came to the conclusion that “Pigging” is a form of behavior which is totally counterproductive in humane, cooperative relationships and groups, and we militate against it in our everyday interactions and work, as well as in group therapy.

When I say that the Pig Parent is totally counterproductive, I say so with the understanding that it has a very definite and powerful function in human affairs — namely, coercion by force or threats of force through crude or subtle means. It is extremely effective in keeping us and others in line. Getting others to do our bidding against their will can be very profitable, especially if we can get them to internalize our wishes so that they obey without having to be coerced any longer.

A large portion of most people's lives is dominated by others, and that is accomplished with the Pig. We are affected unfavorably by the Pig in two major ways: other people's Pigs oppress us and our own Pig oppresses us. More subtly, we are affected negatively by our own oppression of others and by others' oppression of yet others. These two latter forms of oppression can be beneficial, on the other hand, by improving our position of power, which eventually becomes taken for granted — internalized privilege, as Margo Adair calls it. That is why the rejection of the Pig in our lives is inevitably a political act. The Pig is the instrument of power abuse which makes exploitation of the powerless by the powerful possible.

## **CRITICISMS OF THE CONCEPT**

Objections to the concept of the Pig Parent have kept steady pace with its use. Some people feel that the word “pig” is in itself a manifestation of the kind of not-OK energy which we are trying to isolate with the term. “In your own words,” these critics say, “you are pigging the part of the personality which you call the Pig, and it seems that this is a contradiction in terms.”

Others feel that to make the critical aspect of the Parent all bad is wrong. These critics would argue that there are certain aspects of the Parent criticism which are useful and, in fact, essential. For instance, it is argued that children need the kind of input that the Pig Parent gives as part of the necessary discipline of childrearing. It is argued further that to insult parents by calling them “Pigs” is cruel and unwise.

A third group of critics comes from outside the ranks of T.A. They want to dissociate the concepts of Radical Psychiatry from Transactional Analysis, and object to the term of Pig Parent because it is too much identified with egostates, preferring to call it “Internalized Oppression” .

I want to briefly respond to these three criticisms about the Pig.

**1. *The use of the word “Pig” is offensive.*** There is a certain validity to the objection that the use of the word “Pig” to portray an unwanted part of our personality is not ideal. First of all, there are some people who think that pigs are no different from any other animal and that they don't deserve to be singled out in this way. Some people even love pigs. “Why should we single out the pig to exemplify the worst part of our personality?” they ask. Even if we agree that wild and even domesticated pigs are, to a certain extent, disagreeable animals, it doesn't really justify our use of that particular animal in this particular way.

We have thought of calling the Pig the “enemy,” the “devil,” the “other” — and, in fact, any of those names would be quite appropriate. But for some reason, we have not been able to find an alternative name which has had as much appeal as the Pig. To the extent that the use of the word is in itself offensive to some people, there is very little that can be said except that I, and others who use the term Pig, would be quite open to replacing it with a better word that is equally short and descriptive. In fact, we have a standing offer of a prize for a new word which adequately deals with the above objections. Certainly, the term is not meant to insult parents in any way, but it is true that in the absence of knowledge about Transactional Analysis this misunderstanding is almost inevitable.

**2. *The critical parent has positive aspects as well as negative aspects.*** Given that we temporarily accept the term “Pig Parent” to describe the aspect of our personality which is involved in transmitting not-OK messages through the generations, it becomes a matter of very important philosophical distinction whether there is any value whatsoever to that part of us. It has been generally believed that children (and therapy clients) need to be punished, disciplined, and coerced by a power larger than theirs so they may grow up to be responsible, happy and well-functioning adults. This point has considerable currency in our culture, and there is no point in arguing for or against it except on the basis of evidence. For myself, having raised children in a manner which attempted with considerable success to completely exclude the critical Parent, and having seen the success of this approach with my clients, co-workers and friends, there is convincing personal evidence. Obviously, this evidence might not be very convincing to one who believes strongly in an authority-based critical Parent approach to childrearing. Ultimately, then, the only basis for holding to the view that childrearing is best accomplished without any critical Parent input is a matter of personal preference which, for the moment, cannot be supported in any “scientific” way.

However, let me clarify what we are, in fact, saying when we claim that the best approach to childrearing, therapy or relationships would completely exclude any form of Pig Parent behavior. In order to do this, two types of critical statements need to be distinguished from each other. These are a) Controlling Criticism (Parent), and b) Constructive Criticism (Adult).

Controlling parental criticism is intended to impose the will of the person on the recipient. It comes in various forms, the most blatant of which is some sort of an intimidating insult, either crude or subtle, which linguistically has the form of an adjective. Statements like, “You are bad, stupid, ugly, crazy or sick,” are intended to invalidate the experience and behavior of the other person. In effect, the statement is, “Because you are stupid, what you are doing is wrong and you should stop and change what you are doing; because you are ugly, nobody will ever pay attention

to you, and therefore you are wrong and should do as I say.” The intent of the statement is to stop the person short and to bring them around to the parentally desired behavior.

More subtle adjectives can appear to be sensible and rational, but are, in effect, simple transformations of the same kind of statement. For instance, a therapist might say to a client, “One reason why you are not getting better is because you refuse to face reality.” This statement is really a sophisticated way of saying, “The reason why you are not getting better is because you are crazy.” A parent might say to his teenage son, “You have no respect for authority,” which is merely another way of saying that he is “bad.” Other adjectives like “irresponsible,” “overly emotional,” “sensitive,” “passive,” “aggressive,” or “passive/aggressive” invalidate the person's view of the world and attempt to change it in a forcible way — that is, they are basically coercive in intent.

Another type of critical statement is an Adult statement coming from a rational, problem-solving faculty of the person making the statement. For instance, people of different experience and knowledge about any one subject are liable to come together and try to solve a problem. Sooner or later someone will think that he understands a process better than someone else. As an example, this type of a situation often develops when a number of people are standing around a fireplace and someone is trying to build a fire. Getting a good, hot fire going is a rather complex skill, but many people don't realize that this is the case. So, let us imagine an inexperienced person trying to build a fire while someone else with a great deal of experience says, “You're doing that wrong.”

Now, even though I must admit this statement is not very well put, it doesn't necessarily reflect a Parent point of view. Properly expressed, that person would say, “I think that the way you are putting the paper and the wood in the fireplace is not likely to result in a good fire.” That statement could be called an Adult statement, even though it sounds parental. Let's say that it is intended as an attempt to convey information rather than to control the fire builder's behavior. Only when the speaker, knowingly or not, attempts to coerce or diminish the autonomy of the fire builder does the statement become a Pig Parent transaction. Of course, even a person with the correct information *could* be transacting from her Pig Parent; being factually right or wrong has nothing to do with the issue of control. The important thing to remember here is that Critical Parent statements are *an attempt to control*. The contention that we make is that critical coercive statements are not only unnecessary in human relationships, but are, in fact, harmful and will bring negative results, especially in childrearing.

This philosophical point of view follows from the basic assumptions of Radical Psychiatry, which hold that people have a tendency toward health and OKness, so that the ideal situation for growth is one which allows a person the freedom of choice and autonomy to follow their own internal choices, free from external control. Constructive criticism from the Adult widens the choices by adding information, while coercive criticism from the Parent narrows them.

**3.** The last objection to the Pig Parent is that ***ego states are unnecessary to understanding human behavior***. People who want to use the Radical Psychiatry approach, but don't want to use ego states, are excluding from their thinking one of the most powerful and sensible contributions made to the understanding of human beings in recent years. Ego states and their manifestations as voices in people's heads are consensual realities. The attempt to deal with these realities exclusively through an abstraction like “Internalized Oppression” robs the approach of its potency. Internalized oppression is a seven-syllable expression which does, in fact, theoretically reflect some (though not all) of the same ideas portrayed by the Pig Parent concept. Unfortunately, it is also an abstract concept, which tends to intimidate people. It lacks emotional immediacy, and cannot be used to describe a coercive transaction between people because it refers exclusively to the Internalized Oppression. How do you gracefully say, “I feel you are pigging me,” or, “I am having a Pig attack,” using Internalized Oppression as a concept? Referring to the Pig Parent exclusively as Internalized Oppression is very likely to cause the concept to fall away into misuse, leaving the whole area of the oppressive internalized voices completely unexplored. Still, despite the above rationale, we find that the term Pig Parent has, in our use, been shortened to simply the Pig. This evolution removes the concept from its theoretical T.A. roots, but makes it easier to comprehend and use for people who, while completely conscious of the Pig's activity in

their lives, don't necessarily see what it has to do with parents. Therefore, Pig Parent is the correct theoretical concept, while Pig is the current everyday usage of the concept, and Internalized Oppression is a partial concept referring to an internal process but leaving out oppressive, Pig Parent activities between people.

## **THE PIG**

Having given the history and the basic objections to the concept of the Pig, let me now deal with the main topic of this paper — namely how to diagnose and dispose of that oppressive, internalized ego state which contributes to so much unhappiness among human beings.

The Pig is a reality in everyone's life. However, the extent to which this reality is perceived and understood by people varies greatly from person to person. The Pig can be, to one person's consciousness, simply a dark, evil, looming influence, settling over the mind like a suffocating blanket which, without warning, turns everything dismal, hopeless and gray. To another, the Pig is a nagging, insistent voice which continually speaks in her ear and will not leave her alone. To yet another, the Pig is a rational-sounding, sedate, moderate and occasional statement which undercuts every important effort in his life. The Pig can operate in the form of nightmares, daydreams, physical pain, or white-hot flashes of pain or dread.

No matter what particular form the Pig takes, it is essential to its survival and effectiveness that it not be challenged by the victim of its abuse. That is to say, the Pig operates and continues to operate because the person is willing to countenance it and to accept it as a valid part of the world.

An important step in the struggle against the Pig is the recognition that it is an arbitrary external set of messages which has been internalized and is now being listened to and followed as if it were, in fact, one's own best judgment. As long as it is listened to and followed, the Pig Parent has power over its victim. Therefore, it is essential in therapy that the following steps are consecutively taken:

**First**, the Pig Parent has to be located. Where is it? What form does it take? What are its specific statements? What feelings does it prey on — guilt? Shame? Fear? Low self-esteem?

**Second**, how can the person remove his own support from the Pig so that it loses its potency and returns to its original form: an external, oppressive influence which needs to be watched and struggled against?

**Third**, what specific techniques are effective in counteracting the Pig's influence?

Let's look more closely at the three steps outlined here:

### **1. Stalking the Pig**

The first task in fighting the Pig is to make conscious those particular Pig messages which affect the person. The process of making the Pig conscious and demystifying the way it operates is analogous to peeling an onion. Pig messages are layered one upon the other. As we become aware of and begin to discard one layer, another layer comes into evidence. Some people need to work on a totally unpeeled onion, and others have already achieved a level of

understanding of the Pig which implies that a number of layers have been discarded. In any case, starting from the most mystifying Pig, I will describe several layers that a person might have to work through.

The first and most obscure layer of the Pig is one in which its effect on the person's consciousness is a negative emotion of some sort. The emotion can be a very subtle feeling of impending doom, a sudden fright, or a terrifying fear. It can be a persistent hatred, a creeping doubt, or a dread of disease or death. It can be a claustrophobic feeling of being smothered, of extreme disapproval of the self or of another. The experience is often one that does not seem to be attached to anything in particular. It just comes over the person and engulfs her unexpectedly, irresistibly, at any time.

Frequently, when we are happy and feeling OK, the first presage of the Pig is a lurking fear which starts invading our consciousness: "Things are going too well; it must end soon. Whenever I feel this good, I inevitably feel bad later." The person might suddenly realize that he's had a whole week of careless, happy days, and will suddenly be overcome by anxiety. This is merely the first stage of the Pig's blitz. The next stage of the Pig attack is the familiar feeling of fear, dread, or doubt, whichever is the favorite of that person's Pig. Each Pig has its own characteristic emotions, its own specific messages and its own specific techniques. In fact, each Pig is just like a real, complex person with strengths and weaknesses, tricks and strategies of its own.

A Pig attack can last for a few intense seconds and spoil a person's day, or it can start slowly and build up to a fierce pitch, which then subsides. A Pig attack can take a minute, a day, a week, or even longer, depending on the power of the Pig Parent.

With this kind of strictly emotional Pig strategy, it is important the person learn to recognize the specific feeling which is characteristic of his Pig. After having identified the feeling, the next step is to recognize that behind the emotional experience there is always a cause for its onset. This cause may be a verbal statement, an image, or a series of images. There is always some sort of mental activity which causes the feelings.

For instance, one person had sudden attacks of anxiety that came from nowhere, as far as she could tell. She realized, after focusing on the mental events previous to the attack, that they were always preceded by a visual fantasy. This particular fantasy had no words attached to it; it was merely an image of her standing in front of a large crowd of people who were jeering, pointing at her, laughing and throwing stones as she stood wondering what she had done wrong, and feeling terrified. Another man's Pig approached him through a sudden fear of death which wasn't even as explicit as the previous image, but was simply a feeling of lying in a coffin with his eyes closed and being led somewhere, probably to his grave. Other pre-verbal Pig attacks can be fantasies of being killed or raped, of failing miserably, starving to death, being hated by everyone around, being tortured, or getting cancer or some other dread disease.

In any case, the first defense against a Pig attack is to make that pre-conscious fantasy clearly conscious, to discover its contents and to become aware every time that it intrudes into one's consciousness.

Having done that, the next step in stalking the Pig is to verbalize the content of the Pig attack. In my experience, it is always possible to find the verbal messages which underscore the attack. The actual language involved is the next aspect of the Pig that needs to be made conscious. The sentence that is attached to the fantasy might be, "You are going to die," "Everybody hates you," "You'll get a heart attack," "You'll never succeed," or, "You are rotten and no good."

Once the verbal form of the Pig's message is made clear, we come to the next stage of the battle. Here it is useful for the person to get a small notebook to keep a Pig-attack diary of sorts. Every time there is a Pig attack, or every time the person feels bad — even if he isn't sure he's being pigged — he writes down the feeling, and, if possible, the fantasy and the verbal content behind it. This way the person starts to become conscious of not only the specific feelings, fantasies and words attached to his Pig attacks, but also the magnitude of the Pig's offensive. Some people find that when the Pig strikes, it totally blanks out every other mental activity for seconds, minutes or hours. Some

people feel totally overwhelmed and others feel only a slight annoyance. In any case, the purpose of this portion of the process is to document the extent to which the Pig is active and the exact messages which the Pig uses.

During this process, people who are quite willing to keep a record of their negative feelings may or may not be willing to accept that these experiences represent Pig attacks — namely, that they are false ideas, introduced into consciousness by an external source from the past which has now been internalized. People who have Pig attacks have a tendency to assume that the predictions and statements of the Pig are valid. “I *may* get cancer; all the people in my family have.” Or, “I *may* fail; I have failed all my life so far.” Or, “I *am* no good; I have ruined three marriages and my children are all in trouble.” Or, “I *am* stupid; I can't even balance my checkbook.” These are all examples of the way in which people will actually take sides with their Pig and defend the Pig's point of view. There is a very good reason for this: Pig arguments are almost always built around a grain of truth. One cannot completely discount the Pig's point of view without doing violence to some truth, however small. What is important to realize is that these statements are wrong on the whole, or in principle, not completely wrong but substantially wrong. In other words, the Pig's messages are categorical and not open to question or modification. This brings us to the second stage in the battle against the Pig — namely, making conscious the specific external origin of the Pig.

## **2. Separating the Self from the Pig**

Having located the fantasy words associated with the Pig, it is now essential to re-emphasize that the source of all the negative messages we harbor about ourselves is external, and therefore optional. This is often the most difficult part of the struggle: making clear that the Pig is *always* wrong, although not necessarily wrong in its totality, and that its belief system reflects somebody else's interests.

To be convincing, it is necessary to re-emphasize the difference between Pig Parent messages and Critical Adult messages. The critical messages coming from the Adult, such as: “If you do this this way, it won't work,” or, “There is a good chance that you will not get this job,” or, “If you continue to smoke as you are, you are likely to get cancer,” are not really negative messages about ourselves, but are statements of probabilities which are associated with negative outcomes, and are not Pig messages.

If we can assume as a basic given that every human being is OK — that is, that every human being is beautiful, smart, health-seeking, good and right on — then we can also assume, as a consequence, that any statement to the contrary (namely, that she is not OK; that she is bad, stupid, ugly or crazy) is a falsehood. When a person tells himself such falsehoods, they can be confidently rejected. We must choose between whether we are basically OK or not.

Our choice in Radical Psychiatry and Transactional Analysis is to embrace the view that people are basically good. This choice was put in words by Eric Berne when he said that the first and universal existential position held by people about people is, “I'm OK, you're OK.” This is our view, and operating from this view implies that the nasty, demeaning things we say about ourselves (and about other people) are falsehoods to be rejected in principle.

One of the most effective ways of showing the basic falsehood of Pig statements is that they are usually blatantly opportunistic. For instance, one classic form of Pig harassment is, “You are a failure. You never do anything.” One woman who was plagued by this type of statement also reported that whenever she succeeded in something, she would tell herself, “You are trying too hard; most people could do this with no effort at all.” When I pointed out that she could not win no matter what she did, she said, “That's right! Come to think of it, when things come real easy, my Pig say, 'That doesn't count; it was too easy.'”

Another favorite paradox the Pig likes to use is illustrated by the following example: John reported extreme feelings of incompetency and stupidity, reinforced by constant voices in his head saying, “You dumb bastard, you're retarded. How can you be so stupid?” A group member commented, “That's your Pig,” and John answered, “I know, and I feel real stupid for having such a heavy Pig.”

Pig Parent statements are often confused with, but can easily be distinguished from, negative feelings of anger emanating from the Child. This anger is directed outward against external frustrations. Only when those negative expressions are turned around and addressed back to the person do they become Pig statements. In fact, it is a prime Pig strategy to turn our legitimate anger against others into feelings of self-hatred and alienation. Later in this paper I will explain how the same Pig that plagues us will also have extremely harsh opinions about others, causing further alienation from our fellow human beings.

In any event, it is crucial that the person fighting his Pig recognize how Pig statements are different from Critical Adult statements and from angry Child emotions, and that Pig statements are arbitrary and externally generated, and therefore can be isolated and validly rejected.

During this phase, it is common for the therapist to have to argue heartily in favor of this thesis. It is very hard for a person under the influence of the Pig to see her separateness from it. After all, she has taken the truth of the Pig's statements for granted for years, and there is no real proof or evidence that the therapist can muster to the contrary. Everyone fails sooner or later, everyone makes mistakes, everyone commits occasional evil acts, and so when a person hears his Pig say, "You are evil," or "You are wrong," or "You'll never succeed," it is hard to see that this is a Pig Parent strategy, rather than a true statement. The therapist continually has to point out the difference between a rationally-stated negative expectation such as, "That isn't likely to work," and an intense, accusatory, damning, emotional attack on the OKness of the person, such as, "You can't do it," which is characteristic of the Pig Parent. The therapist also has to point out always that the occasional grain of truth in the Pig's statements does not prove the Pig is right. (See Chapter 3 for more about this distinction.)

Sometimes people will argue hotly in defense of their Pig. It needs to be pointed out to the person at this time that his insistence on maintaining and defending the Pig position is, in itself, part of the Pig's hold on his consciousness. In time, the therapist may need to complain that this is an unfair situation, one in which the lone therapist is fighting both the client and the client's Pig.

This process can take weeks, sometimes months, to accomplish; the therapist needs to be patient and under no circumstances should she overextend herself to the point of being irritated in the struggle. She simply needs to point out repeatedly, and whenever relevant, that the person is having a Pig attack and is again siding with his Pig against himself.

The therapist should remember that in a therapeutic contract which involves cooperation — and therefore, no Rescues (see Chapter 7) — the therapist should never do more than half the work in the fight against the Pig. It is essential that the client do her part by actively fighting alongside the therapist against the Pig, and if the client sides with her Pig, she is essentially embracing the Victim role. If the therapist indulges in the Rescue role in the situation, he will eventually have to persecute the client. As a consequence, the process of fighting the Pig has to be engaged in slowly and patiently, always making sure that the client is equally involved and taking equal responsibility in the struggle. The work is greatly facilitated when it is done in groups. More allies, more arguments, more support are available than any one therapist can provide (see Chapter 9).

Once this particular portion of the work is completed — namely, once the person fully recognizes the emotional fantasy and verbal content of the Pig, and that the Pig is an external influence which can be separated from the self and fought effectively — we come to the third stage of the struggle, which is the development of the specific moves which are effective in defeating the Pig.

### **3. Techniques**

**Exposure:** One of the most effective techniques against the Pig is exposing it to other people. As long as we harbor Pig ideas, they have tremendous power over our subconscious because within our minds they go unchallenged. In group therapy, with eight people listening, the act of stating openly what the Pig says has a tremendously cleansing effect. It is as if the Pig is a creature which can live only in the murky shadows of our minds. As we turn over the rocks under which the Pig lives and open it up to the group's perceptions, it tends to shrink and die away, almost by itself. Very often, this approach is sufficient to defeat the Pig, but in other cases, even when a person is reasonably convinced of the fact that the Pig is an external, oppressive influence, there will be continued Pig attacks.

**Confrontation:** It is at this point that it is necessary to develop specific confrontations of the individual Pig and to analyze in detail each Pig attack, and what the person is doing to fight it. For instance, some people try to turn deaf ears to the Pig's statements, some people will shout back, and some people will argue with the Pig on a logical basis. While each of these techniques might work with a certain Pig, it may not work with another. For example, a person's Pig may be a nagging, insistent presence which follows him from room to room, constantly repeating its accusations. This Pig is not one you can easily turn a deaf ear to. Instead, it might be more effective to face it squarely and calmly say, "Get out of here! If I ever see you again, I'm going to kill you!" On the other hand, that approach may not work with a brutal, blood-thirsty Pig, which can only be defeated by pumping oneself up to a large size and staring it down until it disappears. Each Pig has its particular source of power, and it is necessary to match power with power. The clever, devious, mind-raping Pig needs an equally clever response; the Pig that predicts illness and death requires a radiant, healthy self-confidence; the Pig that deliberately lies requires truthfulness and knowledge of what is and isn't true.

**Nurturing:** The Nurturing Parent is the natural enemy of the Pig. When being attacked by the Pig, it is often very effective to get nurturing from either oneself or from another person.

In this connection it is important to be able to distinguish Nurturing (You are OK) statements from Pig (You are not OK) statements. Usually, the difference is obvious.

Examples:

N: "I love you."	P: "I hate you."
N: "You are beautiful."	P: "You are ugly."
N: "Go on, you can do it."	P: "It'll never work."
N: "Go ahead, enjoy yourself."	P: "You don't deserve it."

So far, so good. But at times what appears to be a Nurturing statement is contaminated with a Pig message.

Examples:

"You are very pretty for someone who is as old as you."

"You are my favorite child." (Competitive, puts other children down.)

"I don't hate you." (Any negative word in the statement is suspect of being Pig-originated.)

And, given a certain tone, even a sentence like, “Go ahead, enjoy yourself,” can have a Pig undercurrent.

Asking for (and getting) or giving oneself nurturing strokes is a potent Pig antidote. Strokes can be written down and hung in a prominent place, such as the bedroom or kitchen, where they can easily be seen, or they can be recorded and kept nearby to be played back when needed.

Whichever form the strokes take (from self or others, verbal, physical, written, spoken, or recorded), the person has to be alert to the moment they are needed — namely, during a Pig attack.

**Stopping Pig Collusions:** Insulating oneself from people who collude with or agree with the Pig Parent is another important technique. This often involves a separation from relatives who hold the same opinions which are the original source of the Pig Parent, or friends who were chosen in the past because they shared what later turned out to be Pig points of view.

Relating to someone who shares our Pig's opinions can lead to collusions, in which two or more people develop blind spots for certain piggy points of view which they all hold. Scapegoating is an example of a Pig collusion. Racism and other forms of prejudice such as sexism are mass pig collusions. It is necessary to avoid such collusions to fight the Pig effectively. This can be done by mutual agreements to be critical of each other's Pig-originated statements. However, other people sometimes aren't willing to make such agreements, especially if they don't think that the statements and opinions in question are objectionable. In those instances, it may be necessary to avoid contact with such people, especially as long as one is vulnerable to the Pig.

Pig collusions are very important to detect and avoid, since some people's Pig attacks are exclusively the result of their contact with others whose Pigs agree with and stimulate their own.

For instance, one man, after months of working on Pig attacks that seemed to come on just before the group meeting on Mondays, realized that he had a standing telephone date with his parents on Sunday evenings. He hated the calls, but was locked into them and felt he could not get out of them. His parents always talked to him in veiled critical tones by asking questions about his work and relationships. These questions came from their Pigs and stimulated a Pig attack in him. (“You'll never amount to anything,” “You'll never be loved.” ) When he realized this, he decided not to call his parents for a month, during which he was free of Pig attacks.

Eventually, he reopened communication with them, but this time with an understanding of what he was and wasn't willing to accept in his conversations with them. In fact, he was able to educate them about the Pig, and they stopped “laying their Pig on him,” and presumably on each other and themselves as well.

Pig collusions can come from anyone, but tend to come from people who would like to control us and are angry at us because they can't, such as certain kinds of parents, spouses or lovers, employers, teachers, preachers, and politicians.

This stage of the work is an intense period of analysis of the Pig's tactics and techniques, and the countertactics and techniques which serve to neutralize it.

My experience has been that after experimenting with this work, we hit on the effective method, which almost suddenly makes the Pig vanish. When the specific approach that works is found, the person needs to use it every time the Pig rears its ugly head — which it will. The person needs to practice, to be alert to renewed Pig attacks, which, incidentally, will become more subtle as the Pig tries to find new avenues around effective defenses. Yet, the point in

the struggle when an effective strategy is found is clearly marked by a sudden release from the great anxieties caused by intense Pig attacks, so that the person is now in a whole new phase of well-being and feelings of OKness, even though Pig attacks may continue at a much lower level of intensity and with less frequency.

These feelings of well-being come from having developed techniques against Pig attacks which demonstrate that the Pig is wrong, that it is really not part of us, and that we can stop it from dominating our lives.

Sometimes a person will come to group after a week of unsuccessful struggle, and despondently describe their powerlessness when confronting the Pig. Nothing seems to work; the Pig has dominated their lives constantly for days. What to do?

It is important, at this point, to become very specific about the time, place and details of the Pig attacks, and the strategies used to fight it. When did it happen? Where did it happen? What was the beginning of it? How did it proceed? And especially, what was done to stop the Pig? In doing this, one finds what techniques are unsuccessful in fighting the Pig. The techniques need to be analyzed in order to understand the reason for their lack of success. Other techniques need to be developed to replace those that didn't work. If turning a deaf ear to the Pig didn't work, perhaps calling someone up and getting nurturing strokes will. If that doesn't work, maybe the strokes that are needed are physical, and one needs to get a massage or run around the block. If massage and running don't work, maybe one needs to stage a shouting match with the Pig. If a shouting match doesn't work, then perhaps one can develop finely tuned arguments to defeat the Pig. If having a list of strokes written by the group doesn't work, perhaps this was because the list was kept under one's pillow instead of hanging next to the bed; if arguing against the Pig didn't work, perhaps it was done in a pleading rather than an angry tone of voice. Eventually, a technique that works will be found if the person, the therapist and the group keep at it.

**Exposing Pig for Others:** One very difficult kind of Pig attack is one in which it is not the person herself who is the target of the Pig Parent, but others in her circle. This kind of Pig specializes in making everybody else not OK, and thereby indirectly making the person not OK. This Pig says, "Any club that would have you as a member is not worth belonging to." In this very devious approach, the Pig first completely invalidates everyone in the person's social circle, and then, having done that, invalidates the person for being in it.

Exposing one's Pig when it is attacking other people is a special problem which requires careful handling. In such cases, as in all others, the person is asked to expose their Pig in group; however, when exposing this type of Pig, I follow a careful procedure designed to protect the people involved, as follows:

**1. Never expose the Pig unless there is a therapist present.**

**2. Before exposing the Pig, announce your intention to do so,** turning to the person that your Pig is attacking and saying something like, "Sally, I want to expose my Pig about you, to you. Are you willing to hear it?"

**3. Now the person needs to check how she feels,** and if she is ready to accept what could collude with her own Pig about herself.

**4. If the person is willing, the Pig is exposed:** "I don't like or believe what I'm going to say, but my Pig says about you that you are ugly (stupid/bad/crazy/sick)."

Very often a Pig statement of this sort will not particularly affect the recipient, who will be able to brush it off. On occasion, it can be very difficult to take. In that case, the situation can be an occasion for Sally to work on her own Pig, which also says she is ugly. The only thing that needs to be remembered about the exposure of this kind of insidious Pig is that it is delicate work, and needs to be done more carefully than exposing the Pig when it doesn't involve anyone else in the group.

The Pig often carries implications about other people because, in our culture, its form is so frequently competitive. It seeks to compare us to others, ranking us as better or worse. (We discuss competition in detail in the next chapter.) Sometimes such comparison-making is the front-line strategy of the Pig, and will be obvious as soon as the work begins. But often competitive ranking is a better-hidden, more deep-rooted activity, and only appears late in the work. In either case, both the person whose Pig is at issue, who often feels bad and guilty, and the person on the other end of the comparison, need lavish protection.