



SOUL CARE

CHRISTIAN COUNSELING + SPIRITUAL DIRECTION

Preliminary Note from Nathan: *The following pages are selected portions of Dr. Arthur Janov's thought¹ on the psychological development of the "False Self." Broadly, the term False Self describes a sense of who we are (and present to others) that is not who we really are at this point in our Sanctification or that doesn't include important parts of who we are (usually ugly, sinful, and wounded parts) that we may, purposefully but unconsciously, not be aware of. Because his field is psychology, throughout this document Dr. Janov describes the False Self using the term "neurosis," but for our purposes we can understand neuroses most accurately as an expression of "the Flesh." Though a non-Christian, Dr. Janov has excellently articulated how we are shaped by the interaction of 3 main factors:*

- *The deep desires for love, security and acceptance we are all born with – due to God's image in us and His created intent before the Fall*
- *The psychological pain and internal relational loneliness experienced by each of us from birth – due to our sin state, the inevitable reality of fallen parents, and the fallen world we lived in from birth*
- *Our original sin and autonomous demand to get what we think we need for survival by any means other than surrender to God – also a introduced at the Fall*

For each of us, the resulting product is our very own False Self – intricately, but mostly unconsciously, constructed to cope with the factors listed above and to limit our own and other's awareness of inconvenient truths about our internal realities. That said, I have intentionally not included areas where I believe Dr. Janov comes to wrong conclusions as a result of not theorizing from a biblical perspective and not accounting for the fundamental role of original sin in the shaping and preservation of our False Self.

There are 2 main reasons Dr. Janov's excerpts are of value:

- *He has done a excellent job of describing the power of our fallen world to shape us and our False Self*
- *His conclusion from all of this – to enter our pain and feel it rather than just react to it or numb ourselves from it – is a very biblical and necessary step in the process of psychospiritual growth*

*However, as rare and crucial as the exhortation to enter our pain is in the world of psychology (and even the Church), we cannot actually "enter our pain" without an **ever-deepening** surrender in "Faith, Hope & Love" to Jesus Christ throughout our Sanctification journey. Even as Christians, we cannot will or behave our way into reversing the self-protective refusal of our Flesh to feel our piece of Reality in this fallen world. Only through more deeply entrusting the care of our heart to God will we powerfully experience Christ in that place of honest, painful and freeing surrender. Any other approach is bringing a knife to and gun fight because without Christ there can be no hope for transformative healing and the increasing peace, joy, and power of living from our Real/True Self in Him.*

Psychological Dynamics in the Formation and Maintenance of the False Self

*A compilation of quotes from Dr. Arthur Janov's book **Primal Scream**¹*

"We are all creatures of need. We are born needing, and the vast majority of us die after a lifetime of struggle with many of our needs unfulfilled. The neurotic process begins when these needs go unmet for any length of time. A newborn does not know that he should be picked up when he cries or that he should not be weaned too early, but when his needs go unattended, he hurts. At first an infant will do everything within his power to fulfill his needs. If his needs go unfulfilled for a length of time, if he is not held, changed, or fed, he will suffer continuous pain either until he can do something to get his parents to satisfy him or until he shuts off the pain by shutting off his need.

¹ Janov, Arthur, *The Primal Scream – Primal Therapy: The Cure for Neurosis* (New York: Delta, 1970).

Since the infant cannot himself [fulfill his needs] he must separate his sensations from consciousness. This separation of oneself from one's needs and feelings is an instinctive maneuver in order to shut off excessive pain [or disappointment of emotional and physical needs]. This does not mean that the unfulfilled needs disappear, however. On the contrary, they continue throughout life exerting a force, channeling interests, and producing motivation toward the satisfaction of those needs. But because of their pain, the needs have been suppressed in consciousness, and so the individual must pursue substitute gratifications. He must, in short, pursue the satisfaction of his needs *symbolically*. Not only are unattended needs that persist to the point of intolerability separated from consciousness, but their sensations become relocated to areas where greater control or relief can be provided.

The essence of neurosis is the pursuit of symbolic satisfactions. Neurosis is symbolic behavior in defense against excessive psychobiologic pain. Neurosis is self-perpetuating because symbolic satisfactions cannot fulfill real needs. In order for real needs to be satisfied, they must be felt and experienced. Unfortunately, pain has caused those needs to be buried.

Neurosis does not begin at the instant a child suppresses his first feeling, but we might say the neurotic process does. The child shuts down in stages. Each suppression and denial of need turn the child off a bit more. But one day there occurs a critical shift in which the child is primarily turned off, in which he is more unreal than real, and at that critical point we may judge him to be a neurotic. From that time on, he will operate on a system of dual selves; the unreal and real selves. The real self is the real needs and feelings of the organism. The unreal self is the cover of those feelings and becomes the façade required by neurotics in order to fulfill needs of their own.

The major reason I have found that children become neurotic is that their parents are too busy struggling with unmet infantile needs of their own. This is the way the sins of the parents are visited on the children in a seemingly never-ending cycle. Demands for the child to be unreal are often not explicit. Nevertheless, parental need becomes the child's implicit command. The child is born into his parents' needs and begins struggling to fulfill them almost from the moment he is alive....What he will not do is be himself. The thousands of operations that go on between parents and children which deny the natural Primal needs of the child mean that the child will hurt. They mean that he cannot be what he is and be loved. These pains all add up to: "I am not loved and have no hope of love when I am really myself."

As assaults on the real system mount, they begin to crush the real person. One day an event will take place which, though not necessarily traumatic in itself...will shift the balance between real and unreal and render the child neurotic. It is a time in the young child's life when all the past humiliations, negations, and deprivations accumulate into an inchoate realization: "There is no hope of being loved for what I am." It is then that the child defends himself against that catastrophic realization by becoming spilt from his feelings, and slips quietly into neurosis. The realization is not a conscious one.

The attempt of the child to please his parents I call the struggle. The struggle begins first with parents and later generalizes to the world. It spreads beyond the family because the person carries his deprived needs with him wherever he goes, and those needs must be acted out. He will seek out parent substitutes with whom he will play out his neurotic drama...What the neurotic does is put new labels (the need to feel important, for instance) on old unconscious needs (to be loved and valued). In time he may come to believe that these labels are real feelings and that their pursuit is necessary.

Struggle is what keeps a child from feeling his hopelessness. It lies in overwork, in slaving for high grades, in being the performer... Struggle is the neurotic's hope of being loved. Instead of being himself, he struggles to become another version of himself. Sooner or later the child comes to believe that this version is the real him. The neurotic is usually too busy trying to be himself to realize that he isn't. The "act" is no longer voluntary and conscious; it is automatic and unconscious.

It is possible that a major Primal Scene [an extremely painful, shaping event] can occur in the earliest months of life. This happens when an event takes place that is so intrinsically shattering that the young child cannot defend himself and must split away from the experience.

Because of neurosis, one can receive dozens of compliments in an evening, but one small criticism makes all the compliments unimportant because it has set off lifelong feeling of being worthless, inadequate, unwanted, etc. Often neurotics are drawn to critical people just because they can struggle symbolically with critical parent surrogates so as to finally resolve and overcome criticism. This is the same dynamic process by which someone will become involved with a cold, aloof person in order symbolically to make (through him) one's parents warm. This is the essence of the neurotic struggle – to set up the original home situation and attempt to resolve it, to marry a weak man and try to provoke him to be strong, or to find a strong man and to chop him unmercifully so that he will be weak and without power. Why do people symbolically "marry" their "mommies and daddies?" In order to make them into real, loving people. Since it cannot happen, it only ensures that the struggle will continue...

To understand why thirty years after being faced with a shocking realization [of not being fully loved] a person is still reacting to it, we must bear in mind that the young infant is wide open. He is defenseless at first, and this means that he can perceive in a direct feeling way. What he may perceive in his earliest months or years may be too much to bear. So he covers. He may develop symptoms or dull his senses, yet the painful perception is still there waiting to be felt. Current adult events cannot produce a split into two people. It happens to young people because they are so fragile and so dependent on parents for life [and the development of a psychological Self].

Defense systems become more intricate depending on the family situation of the child. When the parents are brutal, the defense is direct and on the surface. When the family interactions are more subtle, the defense system becomes more subtle. Those individual who have developed layers of subtle, intellectual defenses (who have fled to their "head") are the most difficult to cure. Insight therapy has been the central treatment of the intellectual class, but any method that further engages the "head" of those neurotics only helps worsen their problem. Simply to know one's unconscious feelings and needs is not enough. It's not about discussing feelings, but about feeling them. Much of modern psychotherapy operates on the assumption that making unconscious feelings conscious is sufficient to change a person. I see it differently – that consciousness is the result of a feeling process and that it is the *feeling* process, not simply *knowing* what those needs are, which changes someone. Knowledge of need, in my opinion, does not get rid of it. Cure of neurosis must always deal with the total system. We therapists have spent decades talking to the unreal front of our patients, thinking we could convince that front to give up the needs and Pains that produced it. There is no power on earth that can do that.

Neurosis begins as a means of appeasing neurotic parents by denying or covering certain feelings in hopes that “they” will finally love him. No matter how many years of disappointment go by, hope is eternal. It must be because the needs are eternal. Those needs drive him to believe in irrational ideas and to act in irrational ways because rational truth is so painful. Neurosis diverts the sufferer away from his Pain and toward hope – i.e., what he can *do* to fill his needs.

When the neurotic becomes disengaged from his Pain, I believe he stops feeling in a complete way. It cannot be emphasized strongly enough that *the result of any symbolic behavior is to shut off feeling*. The neurotic, until he really feels again, doesn’t know that he isn’t feeling. Thus, it is not possible to convince a neurotic that he is unfeeling. Feeling again seems to be the sole convincing factor. The same explanation applies to the person who blows up frequently. Surely, he is feeling anger and expressing it, isn’t he? But unless that anger, which is being siphoned off in bits and pieces each day against symbolic targets, is felt and connected to its initial context, it cannot be feeling in the Primal sense. Until then the anger cannot be considered a real feeling since its targets are only symbols and do not constitute the reality that gave rise to the anger. His blowups, therefore, are symbolic, neurotic acts. What we do as we grow older is spin ever-widening circles of defenses around the need until we are lost in a maze of symbolic activities. Being a symbolic self is a full-time job.

Neurosis cannot be placated, reasoned, threatened...out of existence. It’s pathological processes seem to gobble up anything in its path. You can feed neurosis insights, and it will absorb them handily as it lumbers on. You can cut off one neurotic outlet after another only to find new and better hidden ones. One cannot condition out a need for that is what is real. It is that need, I believe, which will always find new outlets when the old ones are dammed up. I believe conditioning techniques will result in heightening tension and assure the later adoption of other, perhaps more serious symptoms. Driving neurosis is one of the greatest energy sources: the need to be loved and to be real, in body and mind. To specialize in the treatment of symptoms is to deal in fragments of human beings. It must not be forgotten that symptoms are hooked into systems. To treat an ulcer or a depression apart from that system means to neglect causes. This does not mean that symptoms must not be dealt with, but alleviating symptoms is a temporary expedient. Treating symptoms alone, then, means treating unreality. It is an endless job, whether those symptoms are mental or physical. In addition, symptoms do release small amounts of tension. To remove symptoms without removing causes is to leave persons susceptible to worse occurrences from accumulated tension.

The neurotic who is dissatisfied because he did not have his needs satisfied must search out apparent sources of his dissatisfaction. This keeps him from knowing what the real sources of his unhappiness are. So he dreams of getting a new job, going after another college degree, moving someplace else, or finding a new girlfriend. By focusing on his bad job, non-understanding wife, etc., he hopes the basic discontentment will be removed. Because he is not where he is, the neurotic will never be content for any lasting period of time. He is using the present to work out the past.

Contentment or happiness, often the goal of psychotherapy, is not the result of accumulated insights, in my opinion, nor is it chanted one sings, mantrams to be repeated, nor is it derived from the acquisition of “positive” habits. I believe if a therapeutic goal is to help the patient feel contented, such a feeling can be reached only when the patient can finally uncover his real self. Happiness achieved by the unreal self will be just that – unreal. It is very easy to function well, but functioning is not necessarily an indication of feeling or of being well.

We must clearly differentiate going through the motions from having an inner experience... I do not see how lifelong historic internal processes can be altered by the external alteration of [anything]. It seems to be a magical idea held by some that when one goes through certain motions...inner barriers which have persisted for years will fall away. We must keep in mind that activities which will make basic changes in individuals must flow from their [deep] feelings. The flow must occur from inside out. Otherwise, one may engage in all sorts of activities, struggle mightily, yet not change the feeling base one iota. Manipulating the front, rearranging the symptoms, offering symbolic physical and mental trips, teaching him contrived roles in contrived situations do not deal with sources of the problems. The reshuffling of the defenses can go on forever and will not stop until the patient can feel himself. Until the Pain is felt, any one thing will be as ineffective as another... I think that doing anything else with the patient other than helping him feel his Pain is to render him a disservice.

Conventional psychotherapy...lulls patients into thinking they are better because they “understand,” while producing what I call a “psychologically integrated neurotic.” Patients do not need to explain feelings and talk them to death; they need to feel them. “Connection” is again the key term, for it is possible to be pseudo-insightful – to know things mentally without making a connection and therefore not to make change. I would liken conventional therapy insight process to a departmental report submitted to the government analyzing the economic system. The report, like the insight, is incorporated into the system. It is gobbled up and stored away so that it can have no impact on the entire system. This is why I believe that when one is going to overthrow an unreal and unworkable system, one does not engage that system in dialogue. We should generally expect that no matter how precise the insight, or how analytical the report, the system will continue to react in irrational ways. It will grind up and absorb the truth until something happens to remove the unreal system.

Pain has become stored one by one, laminated into layers of tension surging for release. They can be released only through connection to their origins. Each incident need not be relived and connected, but the general feeling underlying many experiences must be felt. Manipulations of the mental system alone cannot qualitatively alter the psychophysical system. Lack of feeling is what destroys the self, and it is lack of feeling which permits destruction of other selves. The neurosis is not just a matter of what one does; it lies in what one is. An act will not wash away the need. A new act is always possible for the neurotic, but that scarcely will change his neurosis.

An example of the literal way in which the real feeling self is suppressed is the yogi who walks over hot coals or goes to sleep on a bed of nails. Every day in my therapeutic practice, I see patients who have managed to split themselves away from feeling as a buffer against Pain, and who can no longer feel their psychological hurts any more than yogi can feel physical pain. In the neurotic, then, the real feeling self is locked away with the original Pain; that is why he must feel that Pain in order to liberate himself; feeling that Pain shatters the unreal self in the same way that denying the Pain created it. Pain is both the way in and the way out.

The Primal contention is that man is neither a compilation of habit patterns nor a mass of defenses against inner demons or instincts. When a person can experience his Primal wants and needs without the fear of losing love, he is experiencing his “being.” When he cannot, he is, to use the existential concept, a “nonbeing.” I do not believe that any kind of special effort, sublimation, or compensation can transform a neurotic nonbeing into a feeling person. In order to be what he is, the neurotic must go back and feel what he was before he stopped “being.” As one patient put it, “In order to be what you are, you have to be what you weren’t.” What they need is a descending experience into the real feeling self.”