

THE JANOV SYNDROME
"Don't Janov Your Colleagues, My Friend"

by

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Vivian Milroy's introduction to the July-August, 1985, issue of **Self and Society** (Vol.XIII, No.4) reminds us of the constant "non-interference" policy of the journal (p.166), which means that the journal is open to very different points of view and, if I understand him correctly, that it is for **us**, the readers of **Self and Society**, to respond to one another's articles.

Therefore, I am responding to Nicholas Albery's **useful** interview of Arthur Janov which follows Vivian's introduction. I congratulate Albery on proposing question that are clear enough to determine whether Janov has changed over the past 15 years. Changed from what? Well, a number of therapists have noticed Janov's contempt for his colleagues, all too apparent in his first book, **The Primal Scream**, and now, based on Albery's interview, continuing only too consistently.

My friends, that is, my therapeutic colleagues, did you know that we are "charlatans", (p.174), that we do "mock therapy", (p.178), that our views, when divergent from Janov's, are "purely whimsy", (p.172), and that we are producing a great illusion by offering therapies

without feeling (thus, Janov's forthcoming 2,000 page book which deals with **other's** therapies, called, **The Great Illusion - Psychotherapies Without Feeling**.) *I can hardly wait!* and that, to give an example, another well-known therapy, called "Rebirthing", is **dangerous**. Proof? Janov says, .

"We get a new referral every week of people who've been through the Rebirthing movement, where they've become incredibly depressed or suicidal or driven to the brink of madness". (p.168) This is science? (Oh, yes, if I understand Janov, he claims to be the sole scientist within the new therapy movement).

But I remember hearing, some years back, that **two** ex-Janov patients were being received by other therapists each week for **their** suicidal ideation. And I know that **my** failures and disasters also go to other therapists to receive an alternative treatment. (I'm glad they do). In fact, if we want to remain quite scientific, Mr. Janov, (and this is not to defend Leonard Orr's Rebirth method any more than any other method), what is the total number of the Rebirth population - I believe that it includes many

thousands of people - from which the catastrophes you cite are drawn? If we had some comparison figures, we might find out (as is my hypothesis, based on feedback from Jacque de Panafieu's and Dominique Leva-doux's Rebirth work in France), that Rebirth is actually one of the **least** dangerous of all the body-oriented therapies (with Janov's Primal Therapy, Lowen's Bioenergetics, and my own Biosystemic Therapy included in the evaluation).

The point is, "please, just a little bit of humility and scientific distance". But Arthur Janov has not changed in fifteen years, so I don't expect he can hear this: I'll just wait for his "defence" and contempt for me.

"But, Jerome Liss, are you not now being a bit contemptuous yourself toward Mr. Janov?"

My Response: "Yes, sorry, it is contagious. That's why I'm writing this article, to clarify the problem. My own guilt-from-contagion doesn't make contempt less problematic either".

I feel that the "Janov syndrome", as I would like to identify this tendency toward pomposity for one's own work and scorn for one's colleagues, might serve all of us who are working within the new therapy movement, to become a bit more humble regarding the "totality" of our therapeutic results, especially when we are the patients. In other words, our therapeutic work upon ourselves might resolve certain conflicts, but other knots can very well remain. In the Janov syndrome, the diagnosis seems to me to be incorrigible jealousy. But I would be curious regarding others' diagnostic conclusions.

One thing is certain: Janov's claim for being "scientific" does not always help us clarify our understanding regarding, "What is Science?" First, he seems to contradict himself in two consecutive lines:

"I just came from a meeting of 10,000 neuroscientists", (where? when? or is that a stupid detail to ask? J.L.), **"and I would say"** (based on what? J.L.) **"that most of the evidence conforms pretty much to what Primal therapy believes".**

Albery: "Do you find that mainstream neurologists and child development people can take seriously the idea that birth trauma can be relived by adults?" (This is one of Primal's beliefs).

Janov: "None of them do. Strange". (p.176)

But what **I** find strange, Mr. Janov, is that you just said that the conference with 10,000 neuroscientists **confirms** Primal therapy beliefs, and one breath later, you seem to say the very opposite.

Objection: "Jerome, you're getting niggly".

Jerome: "I am only asking for a bit of scientific humility".

Arthur Janov identifies his particular physiological research studies, which are actually rather primitive in conception, if one has read Dr. Henri Laborit's physiological theory of neurosis in **Inhibition d'Action** (Masson, 1979), as the scientific paradigm. Evidently, he is unaware of John Rowan's and Peter Reason's epoch-making book, **Human Inquiry**, (New York, John Wiley and Sons, 1981), which creates a totally revolutionary concept of

what science is about. I might add that "Humanistic Science" has developed on several new fronts recently, as indicated by the Conference on Humanistic Research described in the AHP Perspective earlier this year.

No, I am not claiming that Mr. Janov **ought to** be aware of these or any other particular new inroads regarding the question, "What is proper scientific research and thinking?" I am only asking that he practise a bit of the very ordinary scientific approach, which always relates hypotheses to evidence, and which couches these hypotheses as relative and falsifiable (Karl Popper's point) rather than present them as, "I've got the truth, the single truth and the only truth!" (Example: Did I overhear someone say, or primally scream, "I've got **the** cure for the neuroses!")?)

Other brief examples:

1. Janov offered no evidence for his notion that the pleasure system is "already integrated", as he claimed, and therefore, that pleasure plays no role in healing a neurosis. (p.171)

2. Janov now says that breath techniques can be totally eliminated from body-oriented therapies. (p.178) He was calling a very different tune some years ago. Does he have any evidence for this change in method? Does he have a carefully

developed control group to show that breath techniques give **worse** results? Otherwise, I don't see the basis for eliminating breath techniques.

I agree with Arthur Janov when he says that humanistic therapies should deepen their scientific foundations, and when I agree with him on this point, it is with a consciousness that we can always appreciate **aspects** of someone's assemblage of ideas, an open approach which Janov doesn't seem to use very often himself. To repeat the positive part of this argument: There is a new literature, which I have partially cited above, that reposes the question of what the appropriate scientific paradigm is when the subject of our study is the human being - complex, unique and free!

Our universe of therapeutic practice and understanding is growing. We can read **Self and Society**, or **Energy and Character**, or the **American AHP Journal**, to notice the evidence. And in this growing universe involving a multiplicity of therapies and theories, all having virtues **and** limitations, I don't quite see the place for Janov's contempt for his peers.

Therefore, I conclude as I began: "Don't 'Janov' Your Colleagues, My Friend".