

I Am Identical
Jono Schneider

It's a short essay on the psychological split - the child who splits himself to understand the impossible - that his parents don't love him.

When the French symbolist poet Arthur Rimbaud wrote "I is another", he beautifully pointed out the most crucial issue of the psychological split: I do not know myself, I see myself from the outside and not from within, I am distant from myself and this distance is the terror I feel in the world. But where does this otherness, this distance, this lack of self begin? With the lacking self the child is given by its parents -- when a child is not given a self, instead being made to believe that the self that he is does not exist, then the child grows apart from himself. The adult he becomes is always distant, as he lives with a fissure in his being, perpetually longing for the self given pure acknowledgement and love from the original source -- this loved self remains repressed, for to acknowledge it is to see his parents as they really are, to feel their hatred as it really feels for him. He cannot live with this feeling and be in the world.

I am born, and so I exist within myself. But I do not know myself -- the world is before me, and I cannot comprehend it -- it is too large. The world, although it is real, feels to be a dream, because I do not know that I can move things, that I can touch and move objects, that the world is apart from me. The only thing I know is that when my mother smiles at me, when she feeds me, when she holds me, I am warm, and this warmth means that I exist, that the world exists, too, and that I can continue to exist. I do not know anything about time, about how the present's reality stretches ahead into the future's possibility, but I know that when I am cold, when I am hungry, when I am frightened and alone, that the world no longer exists, that I have disappeared, and that all is lost. All I can feel is my own discomfort, because I am an infant, and all I know is how I feel, even as I do not know what I feel. I do not have words at this time, and

my movements are awkward, I cannot control them just yet. So I need everything right now, until I can feel myself. I need my mother to tell me how glorious my existence is, how much I amaze and dazzle her, how committed she is to caring for me and loving me. Then I will begin to know myself.

Self-consciousness, as we have come to know it as a concept, arises from the knowledge that we exist because we have been told that we exist, and we link what we are told with what we feel, and, subsequently, how we act. And as I am told this as an infant first by my mother -- how she holds me and feeds me and smiles at me and talks to me and lets me sleep -- and then by my father, I not only begin to believe that I exist, but I know that it is impossible for me to be alive and not be important in the world. My existence rests on this fact, and I am bound to this crucial sense of myself, a sense that has passed beyond belief into a pure knowledge, a knowing that I can articulate, a knowing that is also outside of words. This is the self-consciousness of experience.

But Rimbaud is speaking of another child, the child whose mother does not hold him, who does not make him warm, who is too cold to love him, who is too cold to love. This child has lost consciousness of himself, he remains unconscious to who he would really be, he is buried within himself, buried underneath what remains of his parents' bodies. Rimbaud is speaking of a mother like my own, who later remarked, when I questioned her about my birth, that she "felt like a complete failure." My mother's real "failure" was what resulted from this feeling, a feeling that preceded me -- to fail the child that I was, to not hold me, feed me, keep me warm. As an infant, the world invaded my senses as my mother's lack of love kept me from it -- I did not know myself, and I remained unknown to myself; I hid myself from the too-large world, the world at large. And so I became another. This becoming another resulted in my continual desire to be someone else than I was, or to think of myself as possessing qualities that I never actually had, qualities I invented to understand my parents' distance, qualities they invented to distance themselves from the self I wanted to become. Because I was not given a sense of who I really was -- a loved, safe, cared-for child -- I did not develop an internal knowledge of myself. I grew silent about myself.

But it is clear to me now that this "another" that I became was my desire

to see myself as I really was without having the natural guidance of a loving, caring parent. The child's self splits because the child must survive the dark, barren world of a loveless home, the home in which the world is too large, where living is less living than dreaming of one day being able to live. There are no parents in this home, and the child must either imagine them into existence or forget that they do not exist. The child builds his parents; the world seems to make sense for a moment. But the world in which a parent hates its child is mad. The child remains sane within this silence of the repressed self he really wants to be, the self that is always loved.

I know that the love that I was not given preceded me -- this lack did not begin with me -- I know that I am identical with myself, that I am not another. My self-consciousness is what I know to be the truth of myself inside myself, and, consequently, within the world. And I am articulating this knowledge, even as I am able to know it in complete silence. Because I am never silent within myself -- I talk to myself, I am that loving mother who holds me, who feeds me, who smiles at me. "I" am the I who keeps myself warm, while the world is outside of me, the other I am coming to know.

Next Issue of the ASCA News will be June 1, 2002

If you would like to be interviewed for the upcoming June 1st issue, please e-mail Dr. Bilotta at georgebilotta@charter.net or call 508.835.6054. The deadline to initiate the process to be interviewed is April 7th for the June 1st edition.

Remember that if you want to submit an article for the June issue our deadline is May 1st for written articles.

The ASCA News depends upon our ASCA participants to submit articles, poetry, art, etc. Please join if you want to share with us.

Children Learn What They Live

By: Dorothy Law Nolte

An ASCA participant sent this poem to us from Dorothy Law Nolte asking us to offer it to other ASCA participants.

If children live with criticism, they learn to condemn.
If children live with hostility, they learn to fight.
If children live with fear, they learn to be apprehensive.
If children live with pity, they learn to feel sorry for themselves.
If children live with ridicule, they learn to feel shy.
If children live with jealousy, they learn to feel envy.
If children live with shame, they learn to feel guilty.
If children live with encouragement, they learn confidence.
If children live with tolerance, they learn patience.
If children live with praise, they learn appreciation.
If children live with acceptance, they learn to love.
If children live with approval, they learn to like themselves.
If children live with recognition, they learn it is good to have a goal.
If children live with sharing, they learn generosity.
If children live with honesty, they learn trustfulness.
If children live with fairness, they learn justice.
If children live with kindness and consideration, they learn respect.
If children live with security, they learn to have faith in themselves and those around them.
If children live with friendliness, they learn the world is a nice place in which to live.

You can contribute to the **Poetry** section by either sending your poems directly to the Poetry Editor, James Daniel or to THE MORRIS CENTER's Board at tmc_asca@dnai.com.

Announcements

How to order the Survivor to Thriver manual? First, the manual can be downloaded from our web page for free. Second, to purchase a copy of

the manual, send a check or money order payable to "The Morris Center" for \$24.00 (add \$5.00 for orders outside of US, i.e., \$29.00). Mail to George Bilotta, Survivor to Thriver, 173 Malden Street, West Boylston, MA 01583-1020, U.S.A. Manuals are sent priority mail usually within a few days.

If you have expertise and time to promote our web page within the Internet, please contact georgebilotta@cs.com for details.

If there are changes in the Co-Secretary assignments please let us know so we can forward a hard copy or an e-mail with an attached file of the ASCA News to the correct person. Also if Co-Secretaries have a change in address, telephone number or email, please send these changes to: telephone: 508.835.6054, e-e-mail: georgebilotta@charter.net mailing address: 173 Malden Street, West Boylston, MA 01583-1020.

If you have any observations, questions and/or comments that you want to share concerning ASCA and THE MORRIS CENTER, George Bilotta, PhD, welcomes your inquiries. Phone Dr. Bilotta in Massachusetts at 508.835.6054 or e-mail him at georgebilotta@charter.net . Never hesitate to call or e-mail. If you would like to contribute a poem, art, article, etc. to our ASCA News please contact us.